

JOHN BELLETT

THE

PATRIARCHS

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*The Patriarchs Being Meditations upon Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,
Joseph, Job; The Canticles, Heaven and Earth.:*

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The Patriarchs Being Meditations upon Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job; The Canticles, Heaven and Earth

ENOCH

It is not so much of Enoch himself that I now purpose, in the Lord's grace, I would hope, to write a little, but rather of the times and the saints before the flood. Whether it be of them or of him, the materials, as we know, are very scanty; but in the way and wisdom of the Spirit of God, they are full of meaning and of value.

A peculiar attraction has been commonly felt in the Book of Genesis.

The simplicity of the narratives has to account for much of this, I doubt not. Human life is in its infancy and artlessness. The scenes are domestic, and the habits and manners such as family

duties and affections were forming. This is a great source of enjoyment to the mind from this book. Such springs of pleasure are at times tasted in spite of ourselves. We are spoiled very much by the customs of the world, and we suppose that we like them. But still we find ourselves naturally at ease in such scenery as that which this lovely book presents to us. The wife of one wealthy lord, who numbered his servants by hundreds, and his flocks by thousands, would knead the cake for the traveller; and the daughter of another, without practising the language of apology, would be seen by strangers watering the family herds.

Yet with all this there was the truest courtesy. The honour due to all men was as well understood as the love of kindred. It was not barbaric life, though simple and inartificial. It was not rude simplicity; but that which came from an influence that could mould and adorn life. And that influence was the knowledge of God. The times of this book were, as we know they were, unindebted to the advance of civility, or the regulations of cultivated life; but still the state of things was not barbarous, just because there was the knowledge of God. The hand of God was felt, while as yet the conceits of polished life had not time or liberty either to garnish or soil the scene.

It is this which fashions the manners of these early times. Peculiar they are, deeply commending themselves to a right mind; but enough, perhaps, to provoke the smile of many who belong to times like ours. For strange nowadays would be the confidential friendship of a master and his servant. And

yet such was between Abraham and Eliezer, though all the while the duties and rights of the relationship were religiously observed. And how unwarrantable would it now be judged, that the intended husband of one of the daughters, or the son-in-law himself, as in the case of Laban and Jacob, should tend the family flocks in the heat of day and frost of night, getting his wages! And yet in all this there is no moral offence whatever; nothing but what may charm the nicest sensibilities of our nature.

But that which ought to lend this book its principal power to engage us is this: the Lord Himself is seen in it in ways and characters suited to this simple and primitive style. The action of the book being very much domestic, plain and unadorned, His way is according. Whether He communicates His mind, or manifests His presence, it is after this same pattern. He does not employ prophets, but personally makes His pleasure known. It may be in a dream, or with a voice, as well as by personal manifestation; but still it is *Himself*. And even if angels are employed, they are rather His *companions* than His *messengers*.

In the cool of the day, or the afternoon, He walked in the garden. In the field He pleaded with Cain, *personally* pleaded with him, adding the weight and authority of His own presence to a moment of awful and solemn interest. He came down at the cry of Babel, and the cry of the sin of Sodom, just that He might see, as we would do, whether things were really as bad as they were said to be. In forms of intimacy He again and again appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; inviting confidence, expressing

displeasure, or conveying His purpose, in ways of full personal familiarity. And though, in the progress of the book, this style may grow a little slack, still it is maintained in measure to the end, even where we might have least expected it. For to kings, not of the stock of Abraham, the Lord God appeared in dreams by night, and, without amazement, warned them of their duty, or told them of their danger.

The ministry of prophets, as I observed, is not employed. That would have been too distant, too reserved, to suit the general style. Nor is the divine pleasure communicated through the Holy Ghost, or by inspiration. That is not the way either—not the *usual* way. But it is, as we have seen, the personal interference of the Lord Himself, coming in a vision, or by a dream or a word; or in the still nearer way of taking the forms and attributes of manhood; and that, too, not in mystic dress, as afterwards to such as Isaiah, Daniel, or John; but as one who was meeting man in his place and circumstances. As a traveller, needing hospitality, He eats of a calf and a cake at the tent door with one; with another He contends and wrestles, as a man with his fellow, having a quarrel or matter of dispute with him.

See all this style of action in the case of Noah. How interestedly does the Lord God enter into the whole state of things in that day! Just as we all feel, His eye affects His heart. And then, just as we all do, He takes counsel with Himself. He saw the wickedness of man that it was great; it grieved Him to the heart; and then He said, "I will destroy man whom I have created

from the face of the earth." And after all this, just as we ourselves would do, having taken His counsel, He communicates it to a friend, passing it to the ear, and the heart, and the sympathies of another.

It was *thus* that the Lord dealt with Noah. He dealt with him as a man with his friend, as well as like God with an elect sinner. And we ourselves practise these ways. We love these confidences of friendship. We love a second self. "The end of all flesh is come before Me," says the Lord to Noah, telling him what had been passing in His own bosom. And afterwards, in the day of the waters, in the same way of gracious friendship, when the ark was about to float upon the scene of the judgment, "the Lord shut him in." With His own hand He did it.

Here was intimacy. Here was living, palpable nearness of the Lord God to His creature. And this is in character with His general actings and communications in this book. The glory was not as yet taking its place in a dispensation, shrouded in a cloudy chariot, or seated between cherubim. In all that there was majesty and conscious greatness, and the distance of holiness, as suited an ordered economy. But in the times of Genesis this was not so. Things were informal, and the action was desultory; and the Lord was in person, as the occasion demanded, according to this.

In this manner do we find the action of this beautiful book. The elect of God are thus, and thus is the living God Himself. It is as divine as anything else in the Word. And the soul so receives it. And good reason have we for blessing the Lord, because He

has introduced our hearts to such a book as this. For we are not always ready for the higher things. We cannot at all times reach them, or obey a summons to ascend the heavenly places. But the Spirit of God is tender of our weakness, and has provided for it. The Scriptures, if I may take leave to speak in a figure, have change of air and change of scene for our souls.

It is relish and appetite we have to covet, beloved—a holy delight in the things of God, whether they be the things of the "children" or of the "fathers;" the pure milk or the strong meat. *Little* ones in His school are still *living* ones. That is the blessed thing. He who liveth in the mere power of intellect, or in the schools of men, is dead while he liveth.

There is, however, another thing to be said on the times and on the Book of Genesis.

In those times, or, as the apostle speaks, "from Adam to Moses," *law* did not give character to the state of the people of God. Adam was under law in Eden, and so were the children of Israel after the day of Mount Sinai. But not so the generations from Adam to Moses. Sin was equally in the world, but there was no law. Rom. v. 14.

But not only, I may observe, were they not under law; there was also almost a total absence of moral or preceptive instruction. Much revelation of the divine pleasure and counsels there was; but scarcely anything of precept. Under the Spirit, revelation worked its result on character and conduct, and formed the mind and the ways of the saints. Evil was resented by them,

and judged of God; but without a written standard of right and wrong. Without any law against murder, Cain is exposed; without a fifth commandment, Ham's dishonour of his father is punished. And so Jacob's guile is visited and resented by the Lord; and the wicked way of Joseph's brethren. And without the light of any precept the soul of a saint can thus plead with temptation, How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

All this is so, though neither law nor moral instruction was then published. It was revelation in matters of faith which, under the Spirit, formed patriarchal character. Abraham was not enjoined either his altar or his tent; but his call of God, through the Spirit, suggested both. No precept required his high, generous treatment of Lot; but his faith and hope in God dictated and commanded it. Without direction on the case, his knowledge of God and the mind of Christ that was in him disposed him, and taught him to let the potsherds of the earth strive with their fellows, but as soon as his kinsman was a captive to go forth for his deliverance. No word, no oracle from God, distinguished for him between the king of Salem and the king of Sodom; but the light that was in him did.

I might go through other histories in this book, and find these same things. The holy judgment of the mind that was in them, under the Spirit, suggested to those early saints conduct by means of revelation, promise, and calling of God. And this is ever beautiful, when we get genuine samples or instances of it.

Such then are among the characteristics of this earliest and

infant age of our history, and of the precious book which records it. And this earliest method in the way of the Lord is to be the last and the abiding method. In Genesis, as we have seen, the Lord God acted "in the human guise," being personally present in the scene, and seeking the nearest intimacy with His creature. And this is to be the eternal thing when dispensations are over. God in manhood is to be for ever!

Precious mystery! Unfathomable wonder! Blessed to ponder this. The first is to be the last. The song of salvation—the "song of Moses" — was the first breath of the ransomed tribes. It was sung on the banks of the Red Sea, just as they had got beyond the reach of Pharaoh. After experiences were different. They had then to do with themselves. But at first the victory of the divine "man of war" was everything to them. And this first thing is to be the eternal thing. The song of Moses is to fill the courts of glory. Exodus xv.; Rev. xv. And so in earliest days, in Genesis days, the divine presence was not deemed strange, or something which did not suit the earth, or belong to man. The divine courtesies were then, so to speak, freely given, and unsuspectingly received. And so at the end, in days of millennial heavens and earth, the Lord God will be personally again in the scene.

The first five chapters of this book give us an account of antediluvian times, or, as they have been called, "the world before the flood." And it is those chapters I now purpose to look at a little particularly.

The whole opens, as of course, with the work of creation. I

speaking not particularly of this. But, instructed by the apostle, we may say that it is only *faith* which deals justly with this great work. Faith puts God above all the things that were made, or are seen. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Faith treats God worthily—the only principle in the soul which does so. He dwells "in the light which no man can approach unto." Faith owns this. The wisdom of men busies itself in seeing or inspecting Him. But though He will "show" great things of Himself, yet does faith know that no man hath seen or can see Him. 1 Tim. vi. It enjoys all His manifestations; but inspects not His dwelling-place in light.

The second chapter exhibits the man made in the image of God, in his estate in the garden of Eden. All there was tributary to him, all was for him. He had food for all the faculties and desires of his nature, and provision of all desirable things. He was made, however, to *impart* as well as to receive; and that is ever a necessary feature in the happiness of a well-ordered mind. He was important to the garden, as the garden was important to him. He had "to dress it and to keep it." And he saw his dwelling-place the spring-head of a fruitful river, which went forth with life and refreshing to the whole earth. With all this the voice of a Sovereign was heard. A command went forth. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat." But this was no trespass, no discordant note on the ear of Adam. God will not, and cannot, give His glory to another. And

a creature of a right thought, "made upright," as Adam was, must delight in having it so. All this was therefore only harmonious and consistent happiness.

To perfect his condition the Lord God celebrates for him a coronation day, and a day of espousals. But this action has an order in it. The Lord takes counsel with Himself about Adam's espousals. This is done *first*. Then He introduces him to the scene of his sovereignty. He brings the creatures of the field and of the air to Adam, to see what he would call them, and whatsoever he called every living creature, that was the name thereof. This was investing him with dominion, setting the crown royal on his head. Then He prepares the help-meet, and presents Eve to him, following his coronation with his marriage.

This is the order of these events-an order which has a sacred and interesting sense in it. It is not the mere progress of independent facts. It is the design, so to speak, of a great master. For there is, as we now know, a mystery which had been "hid in God," "purposed in Himself," before the foundation of the world, His secret (Eph. iii.), of which this marriage in the garden of Eden was the type. Eph. v. And according to this the Lord, in the solitude of His own presence, in the musings of His own bosom, ere He led forth Adam into his kingdom, prepares his help-meet for him.

This, however, is not merely the *design of a great master*, but the *well-known way of a perfect love*.

The *richest* purpose of joy is the *first* in counsel.

The Lord's earliest thought was about Adam's best blessing. The help-meet at his side, the one like unto him, his companion, was destined to be more to him than all beside. And that which was chief in his enjoyments was the earliest and deepest thought in the mind of his Lord. His Lord pondered it. He spoke of it to Himself. His coronation was taken in hand at once and disposed of; but the getting of his help-meet for him was counselled and talked of beforehand.

This is the way that love would take. We know it ourselves. We like to dwell in thought over the materials of the happiness of one we love. So that all this is sweet and important to our hearts; for we read in it that which may again draw out the admiration and the worship, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!"

And Adam at once owns all this. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," he says, as he received the woman from the hand of the Lord God, owning that all was now complete. The serpent may by-and-by insinuate it to be otherwise. But he is a liar. There is not a flaw in all this estate. No lack, and no exception. Nothing that did not in its way contribute to bless him; and nothing of creature blessedness that was wanting to him.

But all this is at once envied by the great enemy. And he had title to try the stability of it. The nakedness, the unshamed nakedness, of the man and the woman was innocency. Yes, but it was also *exposure*. The creature was to be proved. Strength of

creaturehood was to be tried. And the enemy had title to enter the garden to carry on the trial. He was no trespasser there. The order and purpose of creation made room for him, as well as for Adam himself. The very instrument by which he was to conduct his designs was there already. The tree of knowledge was in the midst of the garden.

The tempter, this serpent that was "more subtil than any beast of the field," was the devil. This is directly told us. Rev. xii. 9; xx. 2. And the scene around us to this hour tells of his victory. "The present evil world," whether in its moral condition or in its circumstances, we get in this chapter iii. And we might have expected this; for the world as it now is has derived itself out of the apostasy of Adam; its character and condition are formed by that great act of rebellion.

The three master-principles which animate "the course" of it—"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" – are here seen to become the springs of moral action in the heart of the woman, as soon as she listened to the devil; for the soul that gives up God must find out other masters, and other resources. And this is the world. The world has no confidence in God, nothing to bind it to Him, nothing to give it rest in Him, no sense of His love and truth. Such has it been since this hour, when man gave ear to the accuser of God. It has therefore found out other objects. God made man upright; but he has sought out many inventions. Eccles. vii. 29.

Conscience, too, is quickened into being. Sin did this. "They

knew that they were naked." And it was then, at the hour of its birth, as it is to this hour, an *uneasy* conscience, a conscience that makes cowards of all who carry it. "I was afraid," says Adam (unable to look at God), "because I was naked." Conscience in man must be of this quality, for it owes its existence to sin. There was no sense of good and evil in him till he sinned; and this sense, thus acquired, must leave him a coward in the presence of the *righteous* One.

Instinctively they make themselves aprons. This is our doing still. Our common state of guilt makes us shun even our fellow-creatures. We cannot stand inspection even from them. One great and constant effort, in the scene around us every day, is to escape *full* notice. The apron is still invented. The social system understands and allows this. Indeed, it is maintained by a common consent of this sort. And religion, in its way and measure, as well as the rules and common understanding of society, helps in all this. But "the presence of the Lord God" is a different element from that of the presence of our fellows. No rules which sustain the social system will make that tolerable for a moment. The clothing and the ceremony, the inventions of society, or the good manners that array and adorn it, will be found vanity. All have come short of *His* glory. Let but the conscience hear the tread of His foot, or the sound of His voice in the garden, and no attempt will be equal to that moment. Even religious inventions will all be vain. They can give no confidence with God, nor turn the current of the heart. With his apron upon

him, Adam hides himself among the trees of the garden.

This teaches holy and solemn lessons. But with all this cowardice there is effrontery. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree." Man lays the mischief down at God's door. He says in effect, "Let God see to it; for the woman is His creature, and He gave her to me;" as he still, in the spirit of his mind, says, "Let God see to it; for the world is His, and He made it." A strange and horrible union! The insolence of the heart charging God, and yet a coward conscience unable to meet Him. The sinner may talk big, and make a noise; he may reason upon God and his own condition, and frame speeches and arguments as well as aprons; but in spite of all he can surround himself with, there he is, like Adam, ashamed of himself, and afraid of God. Man has wronged the blessed God, and avoids Him. He charges Him, and yet is afraid to look in His face while he does so. All this, in spite of himself, witnesses against him. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee," the Lord has but to say. And then, as again in the parable, he must be speechless.

Such was the mind of Adam then, and such is human nature still. But if this were his moral condition, what were his circumstances? Just those of man to this hour also. By the sweat of his face he was to get bread, and in the sorrow of his heart to eat of it; and that too in the place of thorns and thistles. And in like sorrow the woman was to bring forth children; and all this till they both returned to the dust, out of which they had been taken. And man is still after this manner, outside the garden, conversant

with toil and sorrow. Dressing and keeping a lovely surface and a fruitful soil is not the thing or the allotment now. Thorns and thistles and an unkindly reluctant ground are to be contended with, and life to be had by the sweat of the face in the contest.

God alone is above this water-flood, able to manage this mighty catastrophe. And His supremacy is such that He will make even such an eater yield meat, and get sweetness out of even this strong one.

In a glorious sense, however, redemption is far more than remedy of a mischief, or relief, even with advantage, for an injured, ruined creation. Creation, rather, is the servant of redemption; for "redemption is no afterthought." For the pleasure of Him who sits upon the throne all things are and were created. But that very throne has *the rainbow round about it* (Rev. iv.), the sign of covenant faithfulness, and that all things were to stand *in redemption*, or in the value of the blood of Jesus. So that when sin entered, the Lord God was at once prepared for it (I speak as a man); prepared to meet it by covenant arrangements made before the world began, as His very first word to the serpent tells us, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Here the great way of God opens upon us. This promised Seed of the woman, here revealed, is *God's provision for dead and ruined man*, in the face of all the malice and wrath of the enemy. And He is this *at all personal cost*; for the serpent was to

bruise His heel. But though bruised, *He was to achieve a glorious victory*; for He was to bruise the serpent's head.

These are the holy, august characters of this mysterious stranger—this promised Deliverer or Kinsman. Such was the truth revealed on the first moment of our sin, and such has been the truth ever since. This gospel, published in the first promise in the face of the devil himself, is maintained in these last days by the apostle, in the face of men on earth and angels in heaven. Gal. i. 8. Whether it be the earliest or the latest preaching of it, this glorious gospel is still the same. It is "the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son." It is the gospel of the bruised and yet victorious Seed of the woman. In the bright and perfect idea of it man is silent and passive. Abram had only to *believe*, and righteousness was imputed to him. Israel had but to *stand by* and see God's salvation. Joshua in Zechariah iii., the prodigal, the convicted adulteress, are all in like case. And here, at the beginning of our sin, and the beginning of God's gospel, it is just the same. Adam has only to *listen*, and through hearing to believe and live. The word is nigh us, and we have but to receive it without working anything in the heights above, or in the depths beneath. The *activities* are God's; the *sacrifices* are God's. The profoundness of our silence and passiveness in *becoming* righteousness is only equalled by the greatness of the divine activity and sacrifice in *acquiring* righteousness for us. In the sight of such a mystery we may well stand and say, "What hath God wrought!" "Simple indeed it is to us," as one once said,

"but it cost *Hime* everything."

There is nothing in the heart of man like faith in this gospel. The faith of a poor sinner in the redeeming grace of God is the most beautiful condition the soul can be in. As saints, beloved, we may trust God for our need. We may look to Him for counsel, or for provision. We may trust Him to vindicate our doings, comfort us in sorrow, and strengthen us in difficulties. But the faith of a sinner, in the justifying grace and work of His divine Saviour, transcends them all. Nothing is so precious, for nothing apprehends God in so glorious a character, or gives Him to the soul in so wondrous a relationship. This faith it is which uses the richest resources in God, and acts upon the most blessed discoveries of Him. For while all the ways of His glory shine brightly-His strength, and comfort, and wisdom for His needy saints-yet, that He has grace and salvation for sinners, this excelleth them all.

The Spirit of God, in these early times, gives us some most precious samples of this most precious faith; as though (may I say it?) delighting in such a thing, He produced an impression of the finest character *at once*, as soon as occasion served.

Thus Adam, in his faith, talked only of life, though in the midst of death-death, which he himself had brought in, a standing witness against him. He was doomed to be an outcast in a scene of ruin which his own sin had produced. He knew this and allowed it. But he had listened to the story of the conflict between his destroyer and the woman's Seed. In the very place of

judgment-from among the trees of the garden, where conscience had driven him-his ear had caught the sound of the sweet gospel, not of mercy merely, but propitiation and victory, and forth he comes, talking of life. He called his wife "Eve," the mother of all living. All life was in the promised Kinsman-Redeemer. In creation Adam himself had been constituted head of life-"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth;" but that, in his esteem, was now forfeited and gone. Life must flow in a new channel-"He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

How grand in its very simplicity all this was! And there was recovery also of *moral* glory, in a great sense, in all this. Adam had not *submitted* himself to the *majesty* of God, but affected to be as God. But now he does *submit* himself to the *righteousness* of God. His shoulders bowed themselves to receive the covering wrought for his nakedness by God's own hand. See Rom. x. 3. He was now honouring God the Redeemer, though he had just before been doing all he could to dishonour God the Creator-so simply was he led by the Spirit to value the divine provision for a sinner in the promise of our bruised but victorious Kinsman.

In like manner, Eve. She had listened to the same promise, and therefore, as soon as she had brought forth her first-born, she gives witness that this promise lived chief in the thoughts of her heart. "I have gotten a man from the Lord," said she. She as much overlooked herself as Adam did. She gloried only in her Seed. She had listened to the promise with too faithful an

ear to mistake herself for her Seed. It was not over herself, but over him, that she now, in the language of another mother, was singing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour!" There was a mistake here, it is true. But there was witness how the object of faith filled her visions, and the expectations of faith stirred in her heart. And so soon as disastrous events manifest her mistake, and prove to her that this first-born of her womb was anything rather than the promised Seed-that instead of being the bruiser of the serpent's head, he turned out to be the murderer of his brother-still is she found on the rock where faith had fixed her soul. "Let God be true, but every man a liar," was her triumph. Over Seth she exclaims, "God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." Though every cistern fail, she knows the fountain cannot. One son had been a murderer, and another his victim; but still God is true. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord *for ever*; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations."

Precious faith, we may say, "like precious faith," with Adam, and with us, beloved. So Abel. Faith in him had respect to the same promise, the same gospel. The word had spoken of a *bruised* Deliverer; and accordingly it is a victim, a bruised or bloody sacrifice, he lays on God's altar. But not only so. He brings the *fat* of the victim likewise. He knows the delight which God Himself takes in the provisions of His own grace. He knows that He is pleased with the work of His own hand. He understands

that God is a cheerful giver, that there is no grudging in the gift of grace. In spirit he hears the music which the Father's command has awakened in His own house over His returned prodigal. In the delight with which God Himself had clothed the naked sinner with coats which His own hand had willingly wrought (a happier task than even the six days of creation), the faith of Abel seems to glory. And as thus the richest joy that is felt in all the costly mystery of redemption is felt by God Himself, he lays the richest part of the victim, the fat of the animal, on the altar, making *that* the Lord's own portion in this feast of love and joy, in His own house, and at His own table.

This was another most excellent sample of a sinner's faith. Abel, in spirit, was in Luke xv. – that chapter which tells us that the Lord's own joy in it may account for the gospel. And all these are *patternworks* of the Spirit, forming the faith of sinners. There is no questioning of God's grace, no uneasy reflections on creature-worthlessness, though there was plenty of cause for that. The strength, the liberty, the triumph of the promise live in their souls.

And let me add, that if the confession of Lamech (chapter iv. 23, 24) be the utterance of a convicted believing sinner (as I believe it is), it is only another equally fine expression of this same early and excellent faith. It is of an order worthy to stand with that of Adam, or of Eve, or of Abel; fervent, strong, unquestioning, and full of liberty.

God's word to Cain had revealed a great truth—that He, and He

alone, has to do with a sinner. Others, like Abel, may suffer; but all sin is directly done against God, and He asserts His title to deal with it alone. "Whosoever slayeth Cain [the Lord therefore says], vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold."

This great truth, so unspeakably precious to faith, Lamech seems to have received and fed upon, until his whole soul triumphed in it. Not merely *preservation* from man, like Cain, does he count upon, but *salvation*, "the salvation of God." Learning that as a sinner he was *alone* with God, he takes that place, and there discovers how God can deal with him, even in the security and provisions of grace; and that discovery is the light in which his soul at once walks. Like Job, afterwards, he publishes his confession far and wide. "Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech," he says; "hearken unto my speech." Then in true gospel intelligence he magnifies sin, and owns that it was his destruction. "I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt." But then again, in true gospel simplicity, he much more magnifies grace. "If Cain be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold." In his thoughts, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." He is of the very mind and temper of Paul. His confidence and victory are apostolic. He seems to sing-

"I hear the accuser roar
Of ills that I have done;
I know them well, and thousands more-
Jehovah findeth none."

A glorious sight his faith takes of the whole mystery, and of the boundlessness and riches of grace. He listens to the provisions of grace (when alone with God), and the charging of the law, the accusings of Satan, the alarms of conscience, and the self-righteous reproaches of men, are not heard.¹

These operations of the Spirit through the promise on the souls of sinners are truly beautiful. The apron of fig-leaves drops off, or is rather cast away, when such operations go on. It is found *unnecessary* now, as it was found *insufficient* before. And so all the inventions of men. They are the contrivances of the wrong-doer himself, the efforts of the creature, the devices of the sinner, and they can *therefore* never do. But they are as unnecessary as they are insufficient. The coat of skin, the work of God Himself, has made them so.

There is, however, something which this glorious relief provided for the sinner does *not* accomplish. The thorns and the thistles of the cursed ground remain; and with them the sweat of the face, and the sorrow of the heart, and then the return of dust to dust. As to this hour. We shine in "the righteousness of God," adorned under His own eye, and by His own hand dressed

¹ I do not, however, assume that Lamech was a murderer; but he could identify himself with such. With Paul, he could, in the sense of what he was before God, speak of himself as chief of sinners. And we know also that the repentant Remnant of the latter day will, in their confession, quite take the place of blood-guiltiness after this manner. They will look to Him whom they pierced. They will, in the spirit of Daniel or Nehemiah, make themselves one with the guilty nation.

for His presence; but all the while pressures and hindrances and sore grievances wait on the tilling of the earth; and pains bring us into the world, till we return to the dust from whence we came. Neither does this glorious provision of grace displace the cherubim. They accompany it rather. They are stationed at the eastern gate of the garden, with their flaming sword, to keep every way of the tree of life; and no promise which Adam had listened to, no covering which Adam had received, changes this. Man's capacity to regain that tree is gone, and gone for ever. Never will he be anything but a *saved sinner*, pass he along what paths of glory he may, from "paradise" to "the kingdom," from the kingdom to "the new heavens and the new earth." Eating of that tree is only by gift of Jesus, the woman's Seed of the first promise. Rev. ii. 7.

Such are among the mysteries taught us in this wonderful chapter, full of mysteries as it is, and of the profoundest secrets of God. But we have to come down for instruction to learn man and his ways, as well as to rise, as we learn God and His counsels.

Cain is declared by the Spirit of God in the apostle to have been "of that wicked one." The first thing we see in him is his religion. He renders to God, as offering or sacrifice, the fruit of the cursed ground, the produce of his own toil. But this was unbelief. It was the denial of all that had happened since the creation, the *religious* denial of it. It was the direct contradiction of the way of faith, or of Abel. Abel took the way of the promise to God, the bloody victory of the woman's Seed, the death and

resurrection of Christ, and offered of his flock; but Cain refused to see man's ruin and God's redemption, giving God the fruit of the earth; in effect saying, that He was to be read and known in the thorns and the thistles, the sweat, and the sorrow, and the death; and by the solemn services of his altar he was denying all truth.

This was the way of a heart deeply departed from God. He was laying the scene of ruin at God's door, as Adam, ere he repented, had laid down the sin itself there.

His next way is in terrible keeping with all this. He hates his brother, being of that wicked one who is a murderer (John viii. 44), and in process of time he slays him.

Tremendous fruit of the apostate, departed nature. He was the first of that generation who delivered Jesus to be crucified-self-righteous and murderous. For envy the Jews delivered Jesus; and Cain slew Abel because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. It is the world. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." The Lord pleaded with him. See iv. 6, 7. His heart had conceived the sin, but his hand had not brought forth fruit unto death; and with a voice of long-suffering grace and warning the Lord pleaded with him. The grace was despised; this grace of pleading with him at the last hour, as the grace of the promise had been despised

before.

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The light which the Lord Jesus was bringing with Him was the light of life or salvation. Isa. xlix. 6; John viii. 12. And *this* was the light which Cain hated and refused.

There is the light of righteousness or holiness. But the refusal of it is not without remedy. In that light the Lord God had come into the garden and called, "Adam, where art thou?" Adam could not stand it; for he had sinned. It was intolerable to him. He had come short of that glory. He retreats from it. And then the Lord God shines in another light. The promise is made. The character of the glory is changed. God seats Himself in a light which the sinner can approach, and, believing, Adam comes forth.

This was the light which Cain despised, the light of salvation, the light of the promise, the light in which God shines before men outside the garden. And Cain is therefore cursed as Adam had not been. As it is said of another generation, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish."

All this is the solemn history of the first unbeliever. But the treasury of corrupt nature that was in him spends itself in further ways of wickedness. In him was rising that spring which was to give out "its superfluity of naughtiness." He lies after all this, and justifies himself. "I know not," says he; "am I my brother's keeper?" For "the lusts of his father he would do;" and when the devil "speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and

the father of it."

All this, however, and even more than this, was *man*, and not Cain merely. It was the ruined heart of man exposing itself. And because it was this, because it was the common nature that was thus disclosing itself, the Lord takes the judgment of it away from man. "Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold;" for none are without sin. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself." All are in the like condemnation. No one can take up the stone and cast it at another. And in order to express this great principle of truth, and that God alone has either title or competency to deal with sin, the Lord will not allow any man to touch the fratricide. By this divine writing on the case, all are to go out convicted, one by one, and leave the sinner with God. John viii.

For the ends of government, when government in the earth becomes the divine purpose, it shall be said, Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. ix. 6. But this is not so as yet. And for the teaching of the common pravity, that all of us may be humbled by the common conviction, that "we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God," not one of the whole human family is allowed to touch this wicked Cain. And so to this day, when government has been divinely set up, it is not sin that it deals with. *Crimes*, or offences against public order, and *wrongs* done to individuals, may be judged by man; but to take vengeance on *sin* would be the assuming of personal

guiltlessness. "He that is *without sin* among you, let *him* first cast a stone at her." God has to deal with sin *alone*.²

But, further, as to this awful history. Man will not always be making this terrible exhibition of himself. He will not at all times appear as the liar and the murderer. Legion will not be found on every journey we take. There are restraints. The law, in one sense, was given to that end. So there are the checks and improvements of education. And there is the control of God's hand, and the fear of His providence and judgment. And there is "the law of opinion," as it has been called, the verdict of society. These and the like influences produce an order in the social scene, which has therefore become not only tolerable, but full of vast accommodations and large entertainments. A new *scene* is thus produced, though not a new *creature*. Man is man still, the same creature in God's esteem, or in all divine reckoning, though he appears in the character of a respectable citizen of the world, and not as the murderer of his brother. Cain builds a city. He has a thriving, prosperous family. Through their skill and industry

² Some have spoken of the Jews, as guilty of the blood of Christ, so as to have betrayed the principle of self-righteousness condemned here. And yet I doubt not that there is a sense in which the Jews are—in a special sense—connected with that sin in the divine judgment. The land of the Jews is the distinguished field of blood; the blood of Jesus, in a great sense, is specially on them and their children. And so, like Cain, that people are under the special securities of God. And further; that blood is to be cleansed from off their land, though it now so stains it. Joel iii. 21. And still further; the language of Lamech, I also judge, is mystical or typical, intimating the repentance of the Jews who shed the blood, after generations of unbelief and hardness of heart. See note, p. 20.

the face of the world flourishes and looks well. All is respectable; and pleasant and friendly the people are one with another. The murder is forgotten. Man does not hear the cry of blood, but the sound of the harp and the organ. His inventions have stifled his convictions. Cain is an honourable man. But as to the presence of God, he is as thoroughly separated from it as when his hand was freshly stained with the blood of his brother.

This is solemn. Man, as a respectable citizen of the world, may be as separated from God as a murderer. "The remnant of them," as the parable speaks, "took his servants ... and slew them." The remnant! a word which lets us know that the refusers of the supper were of *one* class with those who shed the blood of the innocent.

The ease and indifference with which Cain could turn his back upon the Lord, and upon the recollection of his brother's blood, are dreadful. He got a promise of security, and that was all he cared for. And quickly, under his hand, accommodations and delights of all sorts fill the scene.

In some sense this is principally shocking. This exceeds. But is not this the "course of the world"? Was it not man that slew Jesus? Does not the guilt of that deed lie at every man's door? And what is the course of the world but the ease and indifference of Cain in this highest state of guilt? The earth has borne the cross of Christ; and yet man can busy himself with garnishing and furnishing it, and making life in it convenient and pleasurable without God. This is shocking when we look at it in full divine

light. A respectable citizen of the world Cain was, but all the while a heartless forgetter of the sorrows of Abel! His ease and respectability are the blackest features of his history. He went away as soon as he got a promise of security; and that promise he uses, not to soften his heart, and overwhelm him with convictions of all that had happened, but as giving him full occasion to indulge and magnify himself.

We read in the New Testament of "the way of Cain." It may be, nay, it is, run by others. Jude 11. And what a way does this chapter show it to be! He was an infidel, or a man of his own religion; not obedient in faith to God's revelation. He practised the works of the liar and the murderer; he hated the light; he was proof against God's word in mercy and in warning; he cares nothing for the presence of God which his sin had forfeited, or for the sorrow of his brother which his hand had inflicted. And, as such an one, he can take pains to make himself happy and honourable in the very place which thus witnessed against him.

Is this the "way of Cain"? Is this man still? Yes; and nature outlives a thousand restraints and improvements. For at the end of Christendom's career it will even then be said of a generation, "They have gone in the way of Cain."

This is deeply solemn, beloved, had we but hearts to feel it. There is, however, a rescued, separated people. Seth's family are after another order altogether. They are not seen in cities, furnished with accommodations and pleasures, apart, like Cain, "from the presence of the Lord;" but as the household of God,

separated from that world that lay in the wicked one, to the faith and worship of His name.

It is the sight of this elect family that has principally at this time drawn me to this portion of the precious oracles of God. There is much, I believe, in their standing and testimony which has instruction for our souls. Like all else in these chapters, it is but short notices we get; but great things are to be found in them.

This family of Seth may generally be thus spoken of: *They are strikingly opposed to the way of Cain, and remarkably apprehensive of the way of God.*

I speak not here again of their *faith*, but of their *standing and testimony*. Their faith, or the character of their religion, may be read in that of Adam, who re-appears here at the head of these antediluvian saints; and his faith (kindred with that of Eve and Abel, or of all who receive the gospel of the grace of God) I have already considered. But I speak now of their standing as a household of God, and of their testimony in the world.

The Lord had set a mark on Cain, that no one finding him should slay him. He would not have the blood of Abel avenged. This we have already seen.

The family of Seth are strictly observant of this. No attempt, or anything like it, is made by them to answer the cry of innocent blood. They know that it is heard in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth; but, under this word of God, they are deaf to it themselves. Vengeance does not belong to them. The harvest has not come. They are not reapers. In obedience they heard,

not the cry of blood, but the voice of the Lord countermanding vengeance. And they suffer it. They take the wrong done to their brother, and are acceptable with God.

Express charge demanded this, and this was consequently simple obedience. But the mind of a saint is full of light. It is the mind of Christ (1 Cor. ii.); in us, it is true, darkened in a thousand actings of it, by the coarseness and blindness of nature with which it is now linked; but still, in itself it is full of light. Even angelic nature is all life. Torpidity and dulness do not belong to it. "Winds" and "flames of fire" express that nature, and such things act constantly and fervently; and in like virtue the mind of Christ, the divine nature in the saint, is full of affection and intelligence.

We get some of its fine ways of acting in this household of God.

The innocent blood is to remain unavenged. Its cry from the earth is not to be answered, at least for the present. *That* is enough to teach the saint his pilgrim, heavenly calling. The family of Seth are therefore as pilgrims and strangers here, and all their habits are those of heavenly citizens. If the earth be not to be cleansed, the elect are to be strangers in it with a heavenly calling.

Beautifully true to the mind of God is this! For this is the way of God; and it was apprehended by these saints, more in the light and knowledge of His most perfect and beautiful ways than many of us, beloved, who, in the fuller revelations of this present age, have been so much nourished and instructed. But it is not the

much schooling we get, but the capacity which sits at the lesson. David wanted capacity for this same lesson, when he talked of building a house of cedars, a fixed habitation, for the Lord, while the land was still defiled with blood. But the Lord (may I say?) would be, like the antediluvian saints, a stranger on the earth, a dweller in tents, while blood was staining it; and that very night rebuked the purpose of the king of Israel. 1 Chron. xvii.

We have many exhibitions of this way of God in different forms of it. The Lord, for instance, would have no altar in Egypt, uncircumcised as that land was. He would not have a throne in the land (in the full glory of it) till the day of Solomon, when all was sanctified for His royal presence. Afterwards the glory was grieved away by the abominations which were done in the temple. The captives, in like spirit, hang their harps on the willows of the Euphrates; for how could they sing in a strange land, or let the songs of Zion be heard in Babylon? Separation was the rule of the divine mind. Separation was holiness. Pollution demanded it, and faith rose at the bidding. And with all this the Seth family, the household of God in earliest days-days before the flood-are in company. They are one in spirit with Jehovah Himself in Egypt, with the glory in the defiled temple, with the harps of the captives in Babylon, and with the Church of God in "this present evil world."

We have to distinguish between these two things: *God's assertion of His title to the earth, and God's call of a people out of the earth.*

These different things have been again and again exhibited in the progress of the dispensations. And they have been exhibited, as I have long judged, alternately.

The Lord began, in Adam, to claim and display His rights on the earth. The man in the garden was to own the sovereignty of God, and the earth was the rest and the delight of the Lord, and the place of His glory.

Sin entering and polluting all, and the pollution being left uncleansed, in Seth God called a people away from the earth to an inheritance in heaven.

Then in Noah the Lord God re-asserted His rights here, and took up the earth as the place where His elect might find a home, and His own presence be known again.

After this Abraham is separated from kindred, and from country, and from father's house, to be a heavenly stranger on the earth, with his altar and his tent, looking for a city whose builder and maker was God.

Israel, in their day, then take up this mystic tale of the heavens and the earth, and in the land of Canaan become the witness of the scene of God's sovereignty. The ark passes over the river as "the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth."

And now the Church is set for the full testimony of heavenly mysteries again; and strangership here is the divine idea, till our being taken to meet the Lord in the air.

This wondrous tale these dispensations of God, like day and night alternate, have thus been telling from the beginning;

and still are telling. And millennial days ere long will make these pledges good, and be the glorious substance of these foreshadowings.³

Now let me observe, that whenever God arises in this progress of His counsels to *assert title to the earth*, He begins by judging and cleansing it. And this, I may say, *of course*; because, the scene of His purposed glory and presence being corrupted, He must take the offence away, for His presence could not brook defilement. Noah's lordship of the earth was, accordingly, preceded by the flood carrying away the world of the ungodly. Israel's inheritance of Canaan under Jehovah, as the God of all the earth, was prepared by the judgment of the Amorites and the sword of Joshua. And the future millennial kingdom, when the earth is to be the place of the glory again, is (as all Scripture tells us) to be ushered in by that great action called "the day of the Lord," with a clearing out of all that offend, and all that do iniquity.

But the *call of God* is quite of another character. It proceeds on the principle, that God Himself is apart from the earth, and is not seeking to have it as the home of His glory, or the place of His presence; but seeking a people out of it, to be His, away from it, and above it. The earth is altogether a stranger to such a purpose. It is left just as it is found. No judgment, no visitation

³ Such passages as Eph. i. 10 and Col. i. 20 tell us that both the heavens and the earth are equally the scene of divine purposes. And the great argument in Rom. xi. instructs us about those purposes, and the ways and times of their accomplishment.

of the scene here from the hand of God, accompanies it.

This was exhibited in Abraham. Abraham was the object of the call of God; and accordingly the Canaanites find no rival in him. He does not dispute with them the title or possession of the soil. He finds them, and he leaves them, lords of it. He desires only to pitch his tent and raise his altar on the surface of it for a season; and then, for another season, to have his bones laid in the bowels of it.

So with the Church in this age. She is likewise under the call of God. But her call leaves the Gentiles in power, as it found them. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." The saints have only to obey them unreluctantly, or to suffer from them patiently, according as the demand made by them is or is not consistent with their subjection to Christ and the call of God. They cannot strive with the potsherd of the earth. Peter's sword is to be put up, and Pilate is to learn that the servants of Jesus cannot fight. Their warfare is not with flesh and blood. They are defeated the moment they begin it. The call of God has marshalled the hosts of God against principalities and powers on high, and the battle is there. It does not connect us with the earth. Our *necessities* do, but not our *call*. We need the fruit of the ground, the toil of the hand, and the skill of the heart, to provide things needful for the body. Our necessities thus connect us with it, and we have to do with it for their supply; but our call separates us from it. Joshua went into the possession of the Gentiles, that his sword might make it the possession of the Lord; Paul went into the places of

the Gentiles, to take out of them a people unto God, linked with the disallowed Stone, despised and rejected of men.

The family of Seth were, in like manner, under this call of God. It was intimated to them by the charge to leave the blood of Abel unavenged, and they understood the intimation. If the earth be left in its defilement, God is not seeking it (as we have now seen all His ways declare), and this family of faith are in that secret. They will not seek it either. Cain's house was in possession of it, and Seth's family will leave them there, without a rival or a struggle. The mind of God in them took this knowledge of the way of God, and of His pleasure touching them; and they acted on heavenly principles in a blood-stained earth, whose judgment was now for a time to linger and to slumber.

I own, beloved, that I greatly admire this fine expression of the mind of Christ in these earliest saints. They take the only way which the holiness of God could sanction. They are "partakers of *Hisholiness*." The light they walked in was *God's*; the holiness they partook of was *God's*. 1 John i. 7; Heb. xii. 10. This is a peculiar thing. That light is not merely righteousness. It is the light of grace also. Yea, and the light of heavenly strangership in a polluted world. It is a light which reproves the course of this world, and makes manifest other principles and hopes altogether. There may be righteousness, and the watching and praying which escapes temptation; but there must be a walk according to these principles and hopes, to form a walk "in the light, as He is the light." These earliest believers beautifully shine there, I believe.

They were not under law. They come between Adam and Moses. They had not precepts, as I have already shown. But they were in the light, as God is in the light. And if afterwards Abram did not need to be told to have his altar and his tent-if he needed no precept from the Lord how to order the marriage of his son, or how to answer the king of Sodom-so these saints of still earlier days understood the holiness of the call of God, and took their journey for a heavenly country at the bidding of the pollution of the earth.

I own indeed, again, that I greatly admire this. It is the beauty of the Spirit's workmanship in His elect vessels. All is His. "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" They learn the word in spirit ere the voice of the Spirit uttered it-"Arise, depart, for this is not your rest; it is polluted."

The details about these antediluvian believers are very scanty; but through it all there is this heavenly character. They do not supply history for the world; but they do supply instruction for the Church. This is heavenly. No spirit of burning or spirit of judgment had purged the blood of the earth, and they shrink instinctively from it. In the spirit of their minds they leave it. "What communion has light with darkness? what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?" their conduct asks. Their *religion* is that of separation from the world, and so are *their habits*.

They call on the name of the Lord. The name of the Lord is the revelation He has been pleased to make of Himself. Immanuel,

Jesus, "the Lord our righteousness," Jehovah, God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost-these are among His names graciously and gloriously published by Himself. And "to call on the name of the Lord" was service or worship of God in spirit and in truth.

This was the religion of these earliest saints. It was simply the religion of faith and hope. They worshipped God, and, apart from the world, they waited in hope. "The work of faith" and "the patience of hope" are seen in them. Something of the Thessalonian spirit breathes in them. For they served the living and true God, and waited for the Son from heaven, who had already delivered them. 1 Thess. i. To "call on the name of the Lord" is faith, and salvation, and worship. It bespeaks the standing of a saint, and his spiritual service. It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Joel ii.; Rom. x. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. Psalm cxvi. And such was their religion, such was their worship. It was worship in spirit. No temples, or costly carnal services, or institutions of man appear.

And in their ways and habits they are only seen as a people walking across the surface of the earth, till their bodies are either laid under it, or are translated to heaven above it. They rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; they buy, as though they possessed not; they have wives, as though they had none. All around them is as Babylon to them, and their harps are on the

willows. Cain's family have all the music to themselves. But Seth's family are a risen people. Their conversation is in heaven. They look for no estates or cities. All they take is an earlier Machpelah. Nothing is told us of their place or their business. They are strangers where even Adam was once at home, and, much more, where Cain still was. We may follow them, and in spirit abide with them for a day; but where they dwelt we know not-like the disciples who followed the glorious Stranger from heaven in the day of His sojourn here. John i. 38, 39. They are without a place or a name. The earth knew them not. Like the stranger Rechabites, they are, throughout their generations, one after another, of the wilderness, and not of the city (Judges i. 16); or in Levitical language, they were a standing order of Nazarites, more separated to God than even Israel themselves.

They are the earliest witnesses of this heavenly strangership. Such a life is exhibited afterwards in other saints of God in its fuller, beautiful details; but we have it here in spirit.

For instance, in Isaac. The world was against him. But he strives not with it either in deed or in word. He neither answers nor resists. The Philistines tell him to go from them. He goes at their bidding. They spoil him of his labours. He yields and takes it patiently, as Esek and Sitnah tell us. Gen. xxvi.

So his father Abraham before him. Only, sad to tell it, it is a *brother* who acts the part of the world in the scene. Lot chooses, as the world chooses, the well-watered plain. Abraham suffers, and takes it patiently-though it was something more galling than

the wrong of a Philistine—the unthankful, selfish way of one who should have known better, and who owed him everything. Gen. xiii.

So Israel, in still later days, accepts the insult of Edom in like spirit. They pleaded for a passage through their land by the claims of kindred, by reason of their common origin, by their many toils and afflictions, by the tokens of the divine favour toward them, and by their present need as toiling, way-worn pilgrims through a desert land. But Edom despised them and threatened. They pleaded again, but they were insulted again; they suffered it, and took another road. Num. xx. And so their Lord in the day of His pilgrimage. He sought another village when other Edomites of Samaria refused Him. Luke ix. Precious and happy, thus to put Him at the head of all that is excellent! The good that is done is *like* Him, as well as *of* Him. Isaac suffers wrong from *the world*, and takes it patiently. Abraham suffers wrong from *one who owed him everything*, and takes it patiently. Israel suffers likewise from their *kindred*; but Jesus from those whom *He was serving and blessing at the cost of everything to Himself*, from the world which He had made, and from that people whom He had adopted. And yet "He lays His thunder by," and goes on His pilgrimage of love and service still.

In like spirit the family of God, in days before the flood pursue their pilgrim path. They leave the world to Cain. There is not the symptom of a struggle, nor the breath of a complaint. They say not, nor think of saying, "Master, speak to my brother, that he

divide the inheritance with me." In habits of life and principles of conduct, they are as distinct from their injurious brother as though they were of another race, or in another world. Cain's family make *all* the world's history. They build its cities, they promote its arts, they conduct its trade, they invent its pleasures and pastimes. But in all this Seth's family are not seen. The one generation call their cities after their own names; the other call themselves by the name of the Lord. The one do all they can to make the world their own, and not the Lord's; the other do all they can to shew themselves to be the Lord's, and not their own. Cain writes his own name on the earth; Seth writes the Lord's name on himself.

We may bless the Lord for this vigorous delineation of heavenly strangership on earth, and ask for grace to know some of its living power in our souls. It is this which has drawn me to this portion of the Word at this time. It reads us a lesson, beloved. And well indeed, if the instincts of our renewed minds suggest the same heavenly path with like certainty and clearness. The call of God leads that way, and all His teaching demands it. The pastimes and the purposes, the interests and the pleasures, of the children of Cain are nothing to these pilgrims. They declare plainly that they refuse the thought, that there is any capacity in the earth, as it is now, to give them satisfaction. They are discontented with it, and make no attempts to have it otherwise. There lay their moral separation from the way of Cain and his household. They were not mindful of the country around them,

but sought a better, that is, a heavenly.⁴ May I not therefore say of them, as I have said, that they are strikingly opposed to the way of Cain, and remarkably apprehensive of the way of God?

After this pattern the Lord would have us: in the world, but not of it; of heaven, though not as yet (except in Christ) in it. Paul, in the Holy Ghost, would so have us, taking example from those whose "conversation is in heaven." Peter, in the same Spirit, would so have us "as strangers and pilgrims" abstaining from fleshly lusts. James summons us, in the same Spirit, to know that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." And John separates us as by a stroke: "We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

It is for the Church surely, beloved, to walk in this elevation and separateness. What is according to the call of God, and what worthy of heavenly hopes, but this? We breathe but feebly, and glow but faintly, in company with those and like witnesses. What a temper of soul, it has just struck me, we get in such a chapter as Phil. iv.! What a glow is felt throughout it! What depth and fervency of affection! What a shout of triumph the spirit raises! What elevation in the midst of changes, perplexities, and depressions! The apostle's whole temper of soul throughout that

⁴ What I say of this antediluvian family is only as we see them in Genesis v. I doubt not, as under every trial of man, failure and corruption are witnessed. But I speak merely of their standing and testimony as given to us here. Sons and daughters, as we are told, were born to them, generation after generation, and seeds of apostasy were sown and sprang up among them, I doubt not. But this does not at all affect the lesson we get from this fifth chapter.

chapter is uncommon. But if one may speak for others, it is to us little more than the tale of a distant land, or the warmth and brilliancy of other climes reported to our souls by travellers.

Lead us, Lord, we pray thee! Teach us indeed to sing-

"We're bound for yonder land,
Where Jesus reigns supreme;
We leave the shore at His command,
Forsaking all for Him.

"'T were easy, did we choose,
Again to reach the shore-
But that is what our souls refuse,
We'll never touch it more."

But surely it is one thing to be the advocate of Christianity, and another to be the disciple of it. And though it may sound strange at first, far easier is it to *teach* its lessons than to *learn* them. But so our souls know full well.

We have, however, still to look at the *destiny* and *endowments* of these saints, as we have already looked at their *faith*, their *virtues*, and their *religion*.

The translation of Enoch was the first formal testimony of the great divine secret, that *man was to have a place and inheritance in the heavens*. By creation he was formed for the earth. The garden was his habitation, Eden his demesne, and all the earth his estate. But now is brought forth the deeper purpose, that God has

an election from among men, destined, in the everlasting counsels of abounding grace, for heaven.

In the course of ages and dispensations after this, this high purpose of God was only dimly and occasionally, slowly and gradually, manifested. But in the person of Enoch it is made to shine out at once. The heavenly calling at this early moment, and in the bosom of his elect and favoured household, declares itself in its full lustre. This great fact among the antediluvian patriarchs anticipates in spirit the hour of Mount Tabor, the vision of the martyred Stephen, and the taking up of the saints in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

Such was the high destiny of the elect people.

The prophecies of Enoch and of Lamech are samples of their endowments. And rich indeed, worthy of their dignity, these endowments were. For those prophecies under the Holy Ghost tell us that glorious secrets had been entrusted to them. They were treated as in the place of friends. "Shall I hide from them," the Lord was saying to them, as afterwards to Abraham, "that thing which I do?" For such privileges belong only to dignity. See Gen. xviii. 18. And if Abraham knew the doom of Sodom beforehand, Enoch, in a deeper, larger sense, knew the doom of the whole world beforehand. And his prophecy lets out a mystery of solemn and wondrous glory—that the heavenly saints are to accompany the Lord in the day of His power and judgment. And, as of a character equal with this, Lamech's, which comes after, in its turn, with happier anticipations, sketches the scene that lies

beyond the judgment, days of millennial blessedness, "the days of heaven upon the earth." The Lord has not given up the earth for ever. And these saints before the flood can speak of that great mystery even before the bow in the cloud becomes the token of it. But they know the judgment of it must come first; and they can speak of that mystery also before the fountains of the great deep were broken up.

Rich endowments in the Spirit thus attach to their high personal dignity with God. As with the Church now. "Stewards" they were "of the mysteries of God." They could "sing of mercy and of judgment;" unto God and of His counsels they could sing. Profoundest secrets feed their souls. "The deep things of God," the things both of prophets and apostles, the things of the epistles and the apocalypse, are theirs. Paul was entrusted with the circumstances of the heavenly calling. He speaks of our being caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and of that great expectation as being our comfort and relief against the day of the Lord and its terrors; Enoch in himself, long before, illustrated that very thing. John speaks of the raptured saints accompanying the Lord in the day of His power, joining in the breaking of the potter's vessel, and in the warfare of the Rider on the white horse; Enoch in his prophecy, long before, testified the same. Jude 14, 15. Prophets tell of the wilderness by-and-by rejoicing, and of the desert blossoming, of the blessed One renewing the face of the earth, and instead of the brier, the myrtle flourishing; but long before Lamech had told of this same

comfort in the earth again, and this rest for man from the curse of the ground. Gen. v. 29.

Rich indeed were these endowments in the Holy Ghost. There is even peculiar vividness in these earliest utterances of the prophetic spirit. There is commonly a haze over the distance. It is not clear, as if it were the foreground. Indistinctness invests it. And this, in contrast with the nearer landscape, only heightens the impression of the whole. So the notices of the prophets, and the things reported by apostles. They are delivered in different style. Properly so. The haze of distance commonly invests the communications we get of the future. Such is the perfectness of the way of the Spirit. The very drapery under which the distant or the future appears sets it off fitly. Clearness, or literal definiteness, would be offensive, as glare or nakedness. This is commonly so, and this is all admirable. But if *at times* the distance is illuminated, we can delight in it; and in these earliest notices the latest scenes of divine action are thus set off in strange and beautiful distinctness.

Such was the heavenly calling, its virtues, its dignity, and its endowments, of this antediluvian family of God. The end of their path was heavenly also, as heavenly as any feature of it. I speak not of the *fact* of its ending in heaven, but of the very *style* in which it so ended. No sign among the nations gave notice of it. No times or seasons had to mark or measure it. No stated age or numbered years had to spend themselves. No voice of prophecy had so much as hinted the blessed, rapturous moment. "Enoch

walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." Nothing peculiar ushered forth that glorious hour. No big expectations or strange events gave token of its coming. It was the natural heavenly close of an undeviating heavenly journey.

It was otherwise with Noah afterwards. Great preparation was made for his deliverance. Years also spent themselves-appointed years. But not so our heavenly patriarch. Noah was carried through the judgment; but Enoch, before it came, was borne to the place out of which it came.⁵

And if the days and years did not measure it, nor signs announce it, did the world, I ask, witness it? Or was it, though so glorious and great, silent and secret?

The language of the apostle seems to give me my answer, and so does all the analogy of Scripture. He "was not found, because God had translated him." This sounds as though man had been a stranger to that glorious hour. The world seems to have inquired and searched after him, like the sons of the prophets after Elijah; but in vain. 2 Kings ii. 17; Heb. xi. 5. And this tells us that the translation had been a secret to man; for they would not have

⁵ I am not careful to apply all this, as I believe it may be applied. I rather leave it in the way of a suggestion. But it does seem to me that the Lord, *speaking of the Jewish election*, takes Noah for His text or type (Matt. xxiv.); while the apostle, *addressing the Church*, takes his language the rather from the translation of Enoch. 1 Thess. iv. 17; 2 Thess. ii. 1. For the Jewish remnant, like Noah, will be carried through the judgment—the saints now gathering will be in the sphere out of which the judgment is to be poured. For we are taught again and again, as I have noticed before, that exercise of power in that day, in company with the Lord, is part of the glory of the saints. See Col. iii. 4; Rev. ii. 26; xvii. 14; xix. 14.

searched, had they seen it.

All scriptural or divine analogy answers me in like manner. Glory, in none of its forms or actions, is for the eye or ear of mere man.

Horses and chariots filled the mountain; but the prophet's servant had to get his eye opened ere he could see them. Daniel saw a glorious stranger, and heard his voice as the voice of a multitude; but the men who stood with him saw nothing—only a terror fell on them. The glory on "the holy hill" shone only in the sight of Peter, James, and John, though the brightness there at that moment (night as it was) might have lighted up all the land; for the divine face "did shine as the sun." Many bodies of saints arose, attendants on the Lord's rising; but it was only to some in the holy city they showed themselves. The heaven was opened over the head of the martyr of Jesus, in the very midst of a multitude; but the glory was seen only by him. Paul went to Paradise, and Philip to Azotus; but no eye of man tracked either the flight or the journey. And beyond all, when Jesus rose, and that, too, from a tomb of hewn stone, and from amid a guard of wakeful soldiers, no ear or eye was in the secret. It was a lie, that the keepers of the stone slept; but it is a truth, that they saw no more of the resurrection than had they done so. Silence and secrecy thus mark all these glorious transactions. Visions, audiences, resurrections, flights, ascensions, the glory down here, and the heaven opened up there, all these go on, and yet mere man is a stranger to all. And the translation of Enoch

takes company with all these, I assuredly judge; and so, I further judge, will another glorious hour soon to come, in which "they that are Christ's" are *all* to be interested.

I have now reached and closed the fifth chapter. The first part of the Book of Genesis will be found to end here. For these chapters (i. – v.) constitute a little volume.

I. This chapter opens the volume with the work of creation.

II. Creation being complete, the Lord, the Creator, takes His delight in it; and in the midst of it, and over it, places the man whom He had formed in His own image, with all endowments and possessions to make his condition perfect.

III. Man, thus made perfect, being tried and overcome, we see the *ruin* which he wrought, and the *redemption* which God provided.

IV. V. These chapters then show us one branch of this ruined, redeemed family choosing the ruins, and another branch of it delighting in the redemption.

This is simple, and yet perfect. The tale is told—a tale of other days; but in the results and sympathies of which we live at this hour.

It is the sight of the elect, believing, heavenly household, which we get in this little volume, which has at this time drawn my thoughts to it. They walked on earth as we should walk; but they were, by their faith, hope, and destiny, all the while, very near heaven, as we are.

Are we touching the skirts of such glory with unaffected

hearts, beloved? Does anything more humble you in His presence, I ask you (for my own soul has already given its answer), than the conviction we have of the little estimation in which the heart holds His promised glory? It is terrible discovery to make of oneself. That we have but small delight in the provisions of His goodness, is more terrible than that we have no answer to the demands of His righteousness. And yet both stand in proof against us. After Israel had left Egypt, they were tested by the voice of the law; but the golden calf tells that they had no answer for it. In the progress of their journey, they are tested by the firstfruits of Canaan; but the desired captain tells that they had no relish for the feast. And what is the heart of man still? What was it in Christ's day? The parable of the marriage of the king's son, like the captain of the wilderness, tells us that there is no relish there for the table which God spreads. What are singing men and singing women to a heavy ear? The pleasant land is despised still. Canaan is not worth the scaling of a single wall, or an encounter with one Amalekite. The farm, the merchandise, and the wife, are made the captain to take us back, in spite of the invitations of love and the treasures of glory.

Terrible discovery! And yet it is not hard to make it. The proof of it clings pretty close to us. We know how quickly present interests move us; how loss depresses and profit elates us; and then, again, we know how dull the glory glitters, if but a difficulty or a hazard lie this side of it.

Are we sorry because of this, beloved? Does it ever break the

heart into sighs and groans before our God? Sad and solemn, if we feel it not thus-and terrible, when we deliberately talk to ourselves of making a captain again. And this we do when the pastime and the pleasures of the sons of men again give animation to our hearts, or when their honours or their pursuits become again our objects. Lot's wife, beloved, had got beyond Sodom, and that, too, in company with the elect, when it was found that she was still there, in such a sense as to perish with the city. Israel was as far as the wilderness of Paran, and that, too, in company with the ark of God, when it was proved that they were still amid the flesh-pots of Egypt. Serious remembrances for us all! holy warnings, that we wanton not with those lusts and enjoyments, which once we watched and mortified.

"Of that day and hour knoweth no man" – are the solemn words by which the Lord refuses to pledge the moment of His return to His Jewish remnant. Matt. xxiv. 36. That moment is to be to them as the thief of the night, or as the hour of the woman in travail. So as to death. If it come on any of us without a moment's warning, the Lord has not been untrue to any pledge He has given. And so as to the rapture. In no case is the day or the hour pledged or made known. All is included in *one* word of deep and holy import-"Watch" – and that one word is addressed to all: "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

Whether the close to us be by death or rapture-whether it be to Israel by being taken or left-the day and the hour remain alike untold; no pledge of it is promised at all. Each and all are set

on the watch-tower. *We* wait for "the Son from heaven;" *they* will have to wait for "the days of the Son of man;" but neither of us know the hour that closes the waiting.

That is common to them and to us. We stand in equal condition with them as to this. But together with this there is a difference.

The Jewish Remnant are given signs. That is, they are told of certain things which *must* precede "the days of the Son of man," though they are left ignorant of the day or the hour of that appearing. See Matt. xxiv. 32-36. The saints now gathering to the hope of the "Son from heaven" are, on the contrary, not given any such signs, or told of any necessary precursory events.

The Lord communicated His *purpose* of judgment to Noah, but said nothing to him of the *time* of it. But Noah knew that it could not be till his ark was built. He knew not the time when the waters were to rise; but he knew they could not rise till he and his were lodged in safety. This was a sign, or an event necessarily forerunning the close of his history. And so with the earthly Israel. Circumstances must take place, though the day or the hour of it be not known, ere the Son of man can be here on earth again. But not so with Enoch. No circumstance necessarily delayed his translation. His walk with God was not a circumstance. And that was all that led the way to his ascension. And so with the Church now gathering. She waits for no circumstance-no years measure her sojourn here; no events prepare her heavenward way. She is not put, like the Jewish election, under the restraint of any signs

or preceding circumstances.

The Lord treats it as *deceit* to say "the time draweth nigh;" while the apostle *expressly puts us under those words*. Luke xxi. 8; James v. 8. *After certain signs or events*, the Lord tells the remnant that their expectation is near; the apostle tells us that ours is *always so*. Matt. xxiv. 33; Phil. iv. 5. The Lord exhorts the remnant to watch, because the day may otherwise overtake them; the apostle exhorts us to watch, because we are already of the day, and it is fit that we should act as day-men. Matt. xxiv. 43; 1 Thess. v. 5, 6.

Here lies a difference. But still, all are equally commanded to watch—we in this our day, as ever knowing that "the end of all things is at hand," and the remnant, in their coming day, even though they know that some events must go before.

And beautiful and just this is. For if the things threatened be profoundly solemn, as they are, and the things promised be unspeakably glorious, as they are, it is but little to require of us to *treat them as supreme*—and that, in other words, is *watching*.

And the sense of the nearness of the glory should be cherished by us. I mean its nearness in *place* as well as time. And we need be at no effort to persuade ourselves of it. It is taught us very clearly and surely. The congregation of Israel were set at the door of the tabernacle, and as soon as the appointed moment came the glory was before them. See Lev. viii. ix. So at the erection of the tabernacle, and so at the introduction of the ark into the temple. Ex. xl.; 2 Chron. v. So when it had business to do (though of

different characters) with the company on Mount Tabor, with the dying Stephen, or with Saul on the road to Damascus-wherever it may have to act, and whatever it may be called to do, to convict, to cheer, or to transfigure-to smite to the earth the persecutor, to give triumph to the martyr, or to conform an elect Vessel to itself, it can be present in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It is but a thin veil, which either hides it or distances it. The path is short, and the journey rapidly accomplished. We should cherish the thought of this, beloved. It has its power as well as its consolation. And so ere long, when the time of 1 Cor. xv. 51 arrives, that moment of the general transfiguration, as soon as the voice of the archangel summons it, the glory will be here again, as in the twinkling of an eye, to do its business with us, and in the image of the heavenly to bear us up, like Enoch, to the heavenly country.

Then shall the Lord be glorified in His saints-not as now, in their obedience and service, their holiness and fruitfulness, but in their *personal* beauty. Arrayed in white, and shining in our glories, we shall be the wondrous witness of what He has done for the sinner that trusts in Him. And as one much loved and honoured in the Lord has just written to me, so I write to you, beloved: "No lark ever sprang up on a dewy morning to sing its sweet song with such alacrity as you and I shall spring up to meet our Lord in the air." And his exhortation to me I would make mine to you (though feebly echoed from my heart): "Oh, my brother, set it before your mind's eye as a living reality, and then

let hope patiently wait for the fulfilment!"

"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

NOAH.

GENESIS VI. – XI

How changed is the whole condition of things since the day of Genesis!

Were I to read the opening of this fine scripture, and just expose my heart to the simpler earliest impression of what I get there, it is this thought which would engage my mind; and yet with all ease we can account for this strange and wondrous revolution. In chapter i. God was alone, producing the fruit of His own handiwork, in wisdom, goodness, and skill; and then all was good and desirable. On the return of every evening and morning the divine delights lingered over what the divine hand was working out, and behold all was very good; and the seventh day was sanctified for the celebration of this rest and enjoyment. But now, it is not God's hand presenting a perfect work to God's thoughts and affections, but it is man, the apostate artificer, spreading out a wide scene of corruption and violence for the grief and repentings of the divine mind. The secret of the change lies there. Man has been at work; man has been fashioning and furnishing the scene, and not the living, blessed God. The earth is therefore filled with violence; giants there are, mighty men, men of renown; and the imaginations of that heart which was now making "this present evil world" are only evil, and that

continually.

Here lies the secret. The change was complete because of the new potter that had been at the wheel; the change could not be less. The song of the morning stars, the shout of the sons of God, had no echo in the scene of creation now; man was now abroad—not as a part of the work, but as a reprobate workman.

It is just this which gives character to the opening of chapter vi. And there is no relief for all this in the creature—the best sample and portion it could offer is itself defiled. The sons of God themselves are dragged into the mire—their will, their desire, their taste, are supreme with them. The daughters of Moab have seduced to fornication; and the Nazarites, who were purer than snow and whiter than milk, whose polishing was of sapphire, are become blacker than a coal. The witness against them is, "he also is flesh."

If Adam was seduced by the subtlest of enemies, and followed the sight of his eye and the desire of his heart, the sons of God are now seduced by an enemy equally successful. He works, it is true, from within rather than without—"he also is flesh" – but the sight of the eye and the desire of the heart are again followed. Wives are taken of all "whom they choose;" other lords are listened to, for God is not in all their thoughts, and then it matters not whether it be the promise of the serpent, or the fairness of the daughters of men. Gen. iii. 4, 5.

The multiplying of men on the face of the earth is noticed as connected with all this corruption—just as in the history of the

Church. Acts vi. 1. It was when the number of disciples was multiplied that murmurings and disputings began to arise; and these kindred cases in Genesis vi. and Acts vi. tell us that man is never to be trusted, and that the more we get of him the worse things are. "Jesus did not commit Himself to them, for He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."

Such was the condition of the scene from one end to the other; and against all this corruption and violence which now overspread the earth, the judgment of God is marked-"My spirit shall not *always* strive with man." There may be, and there shall be, a term of long-suffering-as it is said, "his days shall be one hundred and twenty years" – but still judgment is marked, and the day of visitation will come-the Spirit will not *always* strive.

But there is resource in God, as well as judgment with Him. If man, the work of His *hand*, have "grieved" Him, still, drawing from Himself, He will (may I say?) go deeper, and find His joy in the counsels of His *heart*.

"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Man, as a sinner, shall become the object of electing, pardoning, justifying love-he shall engage the *heart* now, as of old, at creation, he engaged the *hand* of the Lord.

Thus from Himself the Lord draws, but from Himself in a deeper sense and way than before. This was to be no more repairing of the creature-such a thing would have been no fit work for God. As to man, God had to repent that He had made

him on the earth; and as to the scene around him, the mind of God was changed-changed unalterably, and for ever. Man, as a thing formed of the dust, was never to be the divine delight again-mere man. But grace can make a new thing-not repairing the work marred on the wheel, but making it another vessel, as it seem good to the potter to make it. In its old estate it was ruined, but in its ruins grace will take it up to make it a goodly and a pleasant vessel of richest treasures and all-desirable beauty.

We admire a ruin; and some, as they have thought of this, have suspected the *moral* of such a sentiment, and been ready to condemn the heart and eye that could linger with pleasure over what was the witness of decay and death, and the entrance of the power of sin. But I would venture to embolden such, and to tell them that they may still admire a ruin, and do so without fear or self-judgment. The redeemed thing is a vast, and precious, and beautiful ruin; it will bespeak the power of sin and death for ever, while displaying the boundless, glorious victory of death's Destroyer. And the thoughts of the Spirit of God, the mind of Christ, as well as heaven itself and all its hosts, will linger over that ruin for a happy eternity. It will be the ornament and the delight of the creation of God. "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it! Shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob!" And again, "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety-and-nine just persons which need no repentance."

This is heaven's admiration of a beautiful ruin; and these are the ways of God. The operations of His hands were, of old, His delight, and the counsels of His grace are now His delight, and the attending angels have their music, and their dancing in the house of the prodigal's Father.

Noah, having thus found grace in the eyes of the Lord, becomes the subject of divine teaching. An elect vessel is always the vessel for the handiwork of God, through the Spirit. The Lord communicates His mind to him; He tells him that the judgment of an evil world, which had now filled up its measure, was marked before Him, but that for him and his house there was safety, and a great deliverance.

This communication has a very precious character in *it-it is strictly according to the previous counsel of His own bosom*. This is very much to be prized. God tells His elect one, that the end of all flesh was come before Him-as, in His own secret counsels He had already said, "My spirit shall not *always* strive with man;" He tells him of the sense and judgment He had of the *moral* condition of the earth-just such as He had uttered in secret before; and, further, He tells him to get ready an ark for the saving of his house, as, in the counsels of His electing love and sovereign purpose, Noah had already found grace in His eyes.

It is very establishing to the heart to notice this. It lets us understand how *exactly* the revelation made to us puts us into possession of the divine mind, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" says the Lord, on another occasion, when

He was, as here, speaking to Himself. And a *fulness*, as well as exactness, I may say, distinguishes these revelations. Jesus says to His disciples, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" – with, however, one exception. The Lord God had fixed 120 years as the term of His longsuffering Noah's preaching, as well as ark-building, was to be for that period. Such was the purpose of God. But Noah was told nothing of this predestinated interval. The Lord kept back all mention of the 120 years. Noah knew, indeed, that the waters could not prevail till he and his were safe in the ark, but how long that might be preparing, or whether or not, after it was finished, any time should pass ere the waters should begin to rise, he knew not. This part of the divine counsel the Father kept in His own power; this was the exception to the fulness of the communication. Events were to take place, signs were to precede "the day of the Lord" – such, at least, as the finishing and filling of the ark. In the language of the prophet, the bud was to become tender, and to put forth its leaves. Had any one talked to Noah about the waters rising ere the ark was ready, Noah would not have been shaken in mind, or in anywise troubled. That could not be. "The time draweth nigh" would have been deceit then, as it will be by-and-by, when the earthly remnant, or election, are, like Noah, waiting for redemption. Luke xxi. 8. But still, the period itself, the term of the divine longsuffering, was put in the Father's power, and no one knew the day nor the hour. So rich and full are those harmonies in earlier and latter days, in typical and closing actions

of God's hand. Noah was at this time an *earthly* man-that is an elect one destined for inheritance in the earth, as the nation of Israel, by-and-by, will be; and both of them, in their several days, are provided, by divine instructions, against the deceits which might alarm them, or the promises which might seduce them, but the day and hour of their deliverance are not told.

The ark, in the size, fashion, and material of it, is entirely the prescription of God. Noah has but to make it-the Lord plans it as well as appoints it. The making of it is only the trial and the proof of faith-"by faith Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Israel fashioning the sanctuary, in after days, was a like act of faith. They had to make it, and make it they did, with willing hearts and ready service, yielding their brass, and their silver, and their gold, their fine linen, badgers' skins, shittim-wood, oil, spices, and precious stones. But all this was only the obedience of faith to the way of deliverance and peace, which God Himself had planned and revealed. They made the sanctuary as Noah made the ark; but neither was his act nor their act anything more than faith in the provisions of God. And what is the gospel, and faith in the gospel, to this hour, but such a revelation of the provisions of grace, and such obedience to that revelation? The religion of the elect has ever been the same-"It is of faith, that it might be by grace." Faith in God's sovereign provisions was Adam's religion at the beginning, then it was Noah's, afterwards it was the religion of Abraham, and of every true Israelite; and so at this day it is ours. We all, as well

as Adam, come forth from our shame, and fear, and confusion of conscience, at the tidings of the bruised and bruising Seed of the woman. We all, as well as Noah, prepare an ark for salvation, and become heirs of the righteousness which is by faith; we all as well as Israel, betake us from the fiery hill to the sanctuary of enthroned mercy-and Jesus, Jesus, is the name borne along the line, from one end of it to the other, of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and saints, Gentile and Jewish, small and great, in the deep-toned melody that is to charm the eternity of heaven.

It is not merely mercy. Heaven knows no such thought. Neither is it simple, naked promise. It is *propitiation* and victory, and *purchased* as well as promised blessings.

Inspect the sanctuary of God and you will find that it is not mere mercy that is there. It is enthroned mercy, mercy on the ark of the covenant, mercy sustained by the work and on the person of the Son of God. And faith has respect only to such a mystery as that. Faith never talks of mere mercy. It could not. It could no more talk of mere mercy in God than it could of moral righteousness in man. The gospel does not know such ideas, and therefore faith cannot apprehend them. The gospel reveals One who is just, while justifying the ungodly. Mercy and truth have met together. It is glory to God in the highest while it is peace and good will to men. This is the way of the gospel.

Abraham is in the faith of this, as we see in Genesis xv. The Lord had said to him, "I will give thee this land to inherit it." This was a promise, the promise too of One that could not

lie. It was an immutable thing. And Abraham rightly listened to this. As a sinner, who knew full well and full justly, that promises to such an one must have foundations and warranty, he listened to it; therefore he at once says, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" Is this a challenge of the promise? Is this a question of the divine truthfulness? No, indeed. It is only faith letting God know, that it was a conscious sinner who was listening to His promise, which needed therefore some warranty, or consideration, to carry it with certainty to the heart. And the Lord was well pleased with this. Faith always pleases Him, as without it nothing does. And at once He prepares to let Abraham know that *sacrifice sustained the promise*.

Our patriarch, before Abraham, was in the like faith. And walking in the steps of the same faith he takes an advanced character. He attains righteousness. "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation," is now the word of God to him. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, *and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*."

Love, and faith, and the patience of hope were, however, each to animate his soul, and form his life, for that solemn interval of 120 years. While the ark was preparing, the Spirit, in Noah's preaching, was striving with that generation. Nothing can be more beautifully replete with meaning than all this. Noah was in the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope-

a true Thessalonian saint. He was preparing the ark in that faith which had received the divine warning-in love he was telling his generation of righteousness. 2 Peter ii. 5. Just like a saint of this day. His own safety is settled and sure-*that* he knows; but he is careful that his neighbours should share it with him. The Spirit then strove in the testimony as now He strives; but every stroke of Noah's hammer day by day told that He would not *always* strive.

At the close of this predestinated but undisclosed period, Noah enters the ark. This was the great salvation in a mystery. It was as the night of Egypt's doom and Israel's rescue. Nothing less than safety and deliverance under the fullest securities and dearest title in an hour of most solemn judgment, was now the story of Noah. And this is the salvation of the gospel. In Egypt afterwards, the very hand which carried the sword of destruction along the land had appointed the sheltering blood. Could the sword strike? Impossible! And now it was He, who took counsel with Himself about the judgment of the world, who had also counselled His elect about the way of escape. It was the hand which was about to let the waters out which was now shutting Noah in. Could they then prevail against him! Just, in like manner, impossible!

"The voice that speaks in thunder
Says, 'Sinner, I am thine.'"

The One to whom vengeance belongs has settled all the plan of safety. He that is bearing the sword into the land has appointed the scarlet line in the window. But a solemn scene of judgment

accompanies all this. The sun was risen on the earth, as, after this, Lot entered into Zoar. And yet that sunny hour was the very time for the rain of brimstone and fire to fall. Nothing could be done till Lot entered the city, but then nothing remained to be done ere the fire came down.

How deeply was the moment of visitation hid! They might well have said, "Peace and safety," when they saw that morning sun, as he was wont, gilding the bright and happy surface of the scene around them. But even then the "sudden destruction" fell.

Noah's generation was eating, and drinking, and marrying, just as the water began to rise. There was no harbinger, save, like Lot's escape to Zoar, Noah's entrance into the ark. But that was folly. To imprison himself and all that he had in the sides of a ship aground, that *was* folly. But the flood came in the moment of fancied security, and took them all away. They were "willingly ignorant" of the word of God, the testimony of the "preacher of righteousness;" one who addressed them in the power and on the principle of a resurrection hope. 1 Peter iii.

Sudden and sure destruction on all outside, but divine, infallible security on all within. The city of refuge was *appointed of God*, and its walls must be salvation. Impossible to be less. The same righteousness which has pronounced a curse on every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, has likewise pronounced a curse on every one that hangeth on a tree. Gal. iii. Can He then deny His own remedy to the sinner, cursed under the law, when he pleads, by faith, the

Saviour cursed on the tree? Alike, impossible.

"The Lord shut him in." The hand of the Lord imparted its own strength and security to Noah's condition. It is not too bold to say, that all within the door of the ark were as safe as the Lord Himself. The Lord returned, we may say, to His own heavens, or to His throne, which is established for ever, and Noah was left on the earth, in the place and day of judgment. But Noah was as safe as the Lord. "We may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world." Jesus has gone back to heaven, and we are still in this world, the judgment of which is marked before God; but we have the boldness which is proper to Jesus. Wonderful to utter it! And yet is all that mysterious, glorious security figured in that little action, "The Lord shut him in." God's own hand imparted its strength to Noah's condition ere He returned to the heavens.

Some of every sort are borne with Noah from the place of death into the ark of salvation. The "eight souls," as Peter speaks, but with them, remnants of the beasts of the earth, small and great, winged fowl and creeping things, all are housed and redeemed together with Noah.

So was it afterwards in Egypt. Not a hoof was left behind. The great redemption of that day, in like manner, provided for all—Moses and the 600,000, with their wives and little ones, and also all their cattle; all again knew and manifested the saving strength of God. As in the day of Nineveh, long after, "the much cattle" are the Lord's thought, as the six-score thousand persons that

could not discern between their right hand and their left.

And in the coming day of the inheritance of Christ, His dominions will measure all the works of God's hand, "All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea;" and the fields and the floods, and the hills and trees of the wood, shall be joyful before Him. Psalm xcvi.

Welcome mystery! Are they not all His creatures? Did not His hand of old form them, and His eyes and His heart rest and delight in them? And is this lost to Him? May Jonah grieve for his withered gourd, and the Lord not spare the works of His own hand for His abiding joy? He will renew the face of the earth, as it is written-The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, the Lord shall rejoice in His works. Psalm civ. 31. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

But it is here that I may pause for a moment, to notice the dispensational character of these days of Noah.

The earth, as the scene of God's delight, and of His people's citizenship, had been lost by the apostasy of Adam; and the hopes and inheritance of the saints, all through the days before the flood, were heavenly-the Lord thereby disclosing, though faintly, certain portions of the great secrets of His own bosom-the secrets

of the good pleasure purposed in Himself ere worlds were, that heaven, as well as earth, should be connected with the destinies of man. The heavens were opened to man, when Adam, the man of the earth, failed. Gen. v. 24.

That was so. But earth was not shut because heaven was thus opened. The divine counsel ran otherwise. It was this-that God would "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." And the heavenly calling having been already revealed in the story of the saints before the flood, the due season had now come for the revelation of God's great purpose concerning the earth, and to make it known that He had not given it up, because, in His dispensational ways, He had taken up the heavens.

As in Rev. iv. When the heavenly saints, "the fulness of the Gentiles," the mystic elders and living creatures, are seated in their heavenly places, the thoughts of Him who sat on the throne there return to the earth. The rainbow is *at once* seen around the throne-the witness of this, that the covenant which gives security *to the earth* was about to be the spring of action in heaven. And so now in these days of Noah. When the heavenly family had ended their course, and Enoch was translated, the Lord's thoughts returned to the earth, and that, I may say, *at once*; for the next thing of character in the progress of the hand, or the Spirit of God, is the prophecy of Lamech, pledging God and His mercies to the earth again, and introducing Noah-"This same [Noah] shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands,

because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed."

This is all simple-scarcely capable of being misunderstood. The prophecy of Lamech, which introduces it, tells us what we are to expect and find in the mystery of Noah. "The key of the parable lies at the door." The recovery of the earth, the return of God's rest and delight in it, all this will be made good in the coming times of the true Noah, in whom, and in whom alone, all the promises of God are yea and amen.

A great action, however, must usher in those times. The call of the heavenly people is quite otherwise, as in the call of the antediluvian saints. There was in those days no interference with the scene around. Cain's family was left in possession-quiet, undisputed possession-of their cities and their wealth. The visitation of God then, as always under such a call, only separated a people without affecting either to regulate or judge the world. It left it as it found it. But God's claim to the earth, and His purpose to take it up again, is necessarily otherwise. There He is as *thoroughly interfering with every thing*, as in the other way of His "manifold wisdom" He was *utterly leaving all alone*. For by judgment He must purge the earth, and get it fit to be His footstool.

All this is the dispensational truth we learn here, in this parable, or in these times of Noah. The earth has been remembered, and is now resumed, but through purifying judgments. All takes the sentence of death into itself, that it may stand as a new thing, in the strength and grace of Him who

quicken the dead. The earth itself was in the water, or under the water, and the elect remnant were saved-as in the appointed city of refuge-from the hand of the avenger; and all therefore appears again, as in resurrection.

Beasts, and fowl, and creeping things, some of every sort, go into the ark; and there, within that refuge, which kept its charge in peace from fear of evil, the ransomed passed the days of their patience.

But they were more than safe. They were *remembered*-"God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark." So did Joshua, in other days, remember Rahab. The scene of death and judgment lay all around our patriarch. It was one vast, and deep, and mighty ruin-an extended Jericho the accursed-another and a wider land of Pharaoh, with the doom of the Lord resting darkly and heavily upon it. But He who had already shut His remnant in, now remembers them; and in that remembrance there was present life, and, in prospect, a goodly inheritance.

It will be so with another elect remnant, in coming days. Before the same covenant God, who was now keeping Noah in mind, a book of remembrance will be written for them that fear the Lord and think upon His name. Mal. iii. And of them the Lord says, "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels;" as now, in virtue of this covenant-remembrance, the Lord causes a wind to pass over the earth, the waters abate, and the ark rests on the mountains of Ararat.

This remembrance of God was most precious. But Noah, in his city of refuge, had other consolations. The divine remembrance was the hidden comfort of faith; but he had also blessed, conscious exercises of spirit.

The ark had a window in it. The door was in the keeping of the Lord, but the window was for Noah's use. He who had shut him in, alone could let him out-the times and the seasons were in *His* hand. But while the time of his pilgrimage, as a prisoner of hope, cannot be shortened, yet may the hopes of such a prisoner be very preciously nourished, and his spirit within him blessedly exercised. Noah may open the window, remove the covering, look out, and send forth his messengers, his Caleb and Joshua and their companions, to spy out the land, and report to him what it is, whether it be fat or lean, good or bad, and to bring him the fruit of it.

What beauty and what wisdom strike the eye and the heart in all this! This window in the ark, and its uses, are so significant! The divine *methods* are so worthy of the divine *communications*! "Apples of gold in pictures of silver" are the Spirit's words.

Typical, symbolic, parabolic teaching is very acceptable to the heart, and makes ready entrance there. We all prove this, just as children like pictures and stories. Not only, I would here observe, are doctrines thus taught-not only the great mysteries of the glory, but experiences of the soul, the personal inworkings of the Spirit, are illustrated by these same methods. Conviction of sin, for instance, was expressed in Adam retreating from the voice of the

Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden. The longings and inquiries of a soul awakened to a sense of its condition, if haply it might find its path, are given to us in the Israelite standing at his tent door stripped of his ornaments, and looking after the Mediator as he entered the Tabernacle. Ex. xxxiii. And Moses, with his veiled and unveiled face, might have spoken of exercises and experiences of heart to us, even had not the Spirit, by His light in the Apostle, helped our understandings. 2 Cor. iii.

We might go through a thousand such instances. And by this method the great things of God are pressed home upon the heart. By these figures the Lord is standing very near the heart, and knocking there. It is not His grace displaying itself in the distance, or shining from afar, but it is the Lord Himself, and His blessing, coming very near for our full acceptance. We may *admire*, but if we do not also *enjoy*, the purpose of the revelation is not answered.

Now this method is beautifully preserved in these days of Noah. Indeed the whole of Genesis is full of it. It is a book of "allegories," as St. Paul speaks—divine stories written for the school of God.

The ark, as I have already noticed, had its door and its window, and Noah had his spies to send into the promised land—and the mission of these spies, the raven and the dove, express the experience of the saint in the contrary workings of the flesh and spirit, which contend in him.

The raven never returns. The earth may be still unpurged, but

the unclean nature can take up with it. The "present evil world" will do well enough for fallen, degraded man. Indeed, the ark was rather a place of captivity than security, to the unclean raven. She never returns to it when once escaped. But Noah will not trust her. Beautiful saintly intelligence! The raven may remain outside, but that is no proof to Noah that the earth is clean, or fit for the sole of his foot. Noah will not trust her, but sends out a clean creature after her. And different indeed are the tidings which she bears. It is, in principle, the contest of Caleb and Joshua with their companion spies. The dove returns instinctively. There was no rest for her in a place still under judgment of God, and unpurged. And Noah, conscious that he can trust her and commit the question to her settlement, sends her out a second and a third time. And well indeed he may trust her. Her only sympathy is with the pledges of peace and of a new creation. On her second return she bears an olive-leaf in her mouth, and after her third mission she never comes back.

Beautiful mystery! The earth was redeemed from the curse now, and in its new-creation state the dove can delight. All is native air to her. It is now the land of the turtle and the olive, and Noah understands the absence of this clean creature. He at once removes the covering from the ark, and looks out; and the God of glory shortly lets him out, as the God of all grace had before shut him in.

Surely the ways of a saint, the ways of the mind of Christ, are here! I know not that any action can be more pregnant with

meaning. There was the ark, and its window, and its door. The ark itself was for safety, the window for a prospect, and the door for an exodus, in due season. All this was faith and hope ending their pilgrimage in the place of promised glory.

Noah suspected not the ark; he did not occupy himself in feeling its timbers, whether indeed they were keeping the waters outside—he had no doubt of that. He had no pump in his ship, if I may be allowed the figure; and I may utter it, since, homely as it is, it glorifies Jesus in the security He gives the sinner; for such is the very style of Scripture itself.

The lesson taught us may be the profoundest in the mind of the Spirit, but the school where it is learnt may be a despised place. Look, for instance, at Genesis xlviii. You are there at the bedside of a dying old man—a common homely spot. But there, some of the deepest and richest secrets of the mind of God are, in a figure, conveyed to us—the great mystery of our adoption, according to divine good pleasure; and then our welcome into the family of God, in the day of our manifestation, or conversion. And what richer counsels of grace are there than those? And yet in what more common or homely school could they have been taught us?

As in still earlier days, in Genesis xvi. There you are introduced to the domestic arrangement of Abraham's family as to the servant and her mistress, and their disputes; and yet, in all that, you get the profound mystery of the two covenants. Gal. iv. And again, in the act, the ordinary act, of discharging

a servant, another feature in the same mystery is presented to us, in chapter xxi. The wisdom of God delights in these scenes and materials; they rebuke the erring thought of man's heart, that important things must be done or said by imposing methods—that the prophet must come forth and strike his hand over the place. 2 Kings v. 11. But it is with rude and inartificial instruments that both the wisdom of God and the power of God are commonly seen. Rams' horns blew down Jericho, and fishermen turned the world upside down, as was said of them. But these homely methods of God's wisdom aid in carrying the instruction home, and lodging it deep in the intimacies and recollections of the heart. I may therefore still say that Noah's ship had no pump in it. Indeed it could not. Such a thing would have witnessed against it. God's provisions would have declared their own insufficiency. That could never have been. God's provisions and God's works always tell *whose* they are by being *what* they are. Simplicity, and yet sufficiency, give them their character. "Let there be light, and there was light." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and the sinner, believing, rejoiced in God with all his house.

So, in like simplicity, in these earlier days. The heart of Noah was not soiled by a suspicion. He rested in the sea-worthiness of his vessel, because of God's appointment and approval of it—nay, I may say, because of God's building of it. Faith keeping his heart quiet and assured as to the judgment, hope fills it as to the coming glory.

Such is the beautiful way of this "prisoner of hope." *A prisoner of hope* is one of the Spirit's titles, I may say, for all the saints of God. Jeremiah was such an one in his day. Jeremiah was shut up in "the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house," and this, too, for Christ's sake. He was God's prisoner, and such an one is always hope's prisoner. Jeremiah is told to purchase Hananiah's field, and that was food for hope, like the olive-leaf in the mouth of the dove. It told the prophet of good days to come, though at that moment he was in a prison, the Chaldean army at the city gates, and all the land deserted. The waters were again all around and abroad; but the ark of the prophet, like that of the patriarch, had a window in it.

So was Israel a prisoner of hope in the night of the passover. With shoe on foot, staff in hand, and girded loins, Israel waited in the very midst of the judgments of the Lord; but, like our patriarch, they waited there only to pass out to the inheritance of the Lord. And having the pre-eminence in all things, Jesus again and again shows us the perfect way of a prisoner of hope, looking for a resurrection portion. As when He entered Jerusalem, in John xii., the Jewish multitudes and the Gentile strangers being drawn thither to inquire after Him, and all the dignities and joys of the Son of David seeming to wait on Him, His heart waits on the resurrection hope still, "the joy set before him," and forth from that attitude of soul, or place of expectation, He speaks of the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying. Steadily and desirously did His eye rest on the glory which lay, not *in* that hour,

but *beyond* it. In a spirit of entire consecration and sacrifice, He surrenders *that* hour (bright to Him in the world as it was, and big with the promise of all its kingdoms and the glory thereof) to the Father: and the voice from heaven then visits this perfect, blessed "prisoner of hope," with assurances that, in due season, even resurrection times, His name and victory and honour should all be provided for and secured.

Matchless Jesus! – This voice from heaven was again the food of hope's prisoner. And what was the transfiguration on the holy hill but the same? Jesus had been speaking to the disciples of His death, and encouraging them (as He would us, beloved) not to love their lives in this world, when, soon after, six or eight days, as we read, the holy hill shines suddenly with the light of resurrection or millennial regions. And what was all that visitation of glory, but the grapes of Eshcol brought from Canaan to the camp of God in the desert; or as the return of the dove to Noah, with the olive-leaf in her mouth?

The time, however, for "rendering double" to this "prisoner of hope" (Zech. ix. 12), comes in due course. "And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee! bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." And Noah went forth. He landed on the renewed earth, where, at that mystic moment, all was, in a great sense, according to God's mind again; no longer corrupt, as when he had last trod it in its

old estate, but clean, under the refining of the judgment.

Not a thing had gone into the ark thirteen months before, which did not now come forth. The small and the great had been in it, and the small were as safe as the great; the creeping thing of the ditch or the hedge, as free of all danger or harm as Noah himself. Precious mystery! We may be little, and we are little, as the heart knows full well; but heaven, or the coming system of glory, has fitted itself like the ark, for the receiving of the small as well as the great. "A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great." We may be calm, though we know ourselves to be "small" in every way, even as the creeping thing that went in with Noah—for such a little one was equally in the covenant, or "the family settlement," which made each and all, in their way and measure, inheritors of the new world. The Father's house on high has surely made its reckoning according to these differences of "small and great." As in ancient days of typical glory, all the congregation of Israel, the distant ones of Dan and Naphtali, as well as the princes of Judah, joined in the shout of triumph when the fire came down, and in mystery, the kingdom was entered. Lev. ix. Clement and others were not Paul in the measure of their labours, or in the energy of the Spirit; but they were Paul as having their names, alike with his, in the book of life. Phil. iv. 3. The Father has built His house in the heavens, on the very plan of its receiving the saints as well as Jesus Himself. It was part of the original design. Ere foundations were laid, that plan and purpose

were laid. In counsels of everlasting love it was provided that the house should be a large one, a many-roomed or mansioned house, that all the children might be there.

What say we, beloved? Do our thoughts of it and glances at it do justice to this love of God? As well might you say, your prospect from the highest of the hills could do justice to God's creation. Could your glance then measure the ten thousandth part of the earth? The length, the depth, the breadth, the height—the love of Christ which passeth knowledge!

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour: and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." The cleansing of the waters of judgment had made no change in the imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart. They were still evil, and that only. The heart was uncured, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," though there be water to cleanse or fire to refine. It was no change there which gave the Lord thoughts of peace and not of evil towards men.

"Faith eyes the blood of Christ, and not victory over corruptions," as one has said, even where there is such victory. But here, *in spite of corruptions*, that blood awakens thoughts of

peace and not of evil, to give the sinner an expected end. Christ was under the eye of God, and that was enough; as in the day of atonement. The blood of sprinkling is then seen everywhere. That was the great secret, the great principle, of that mystic day in Israel. The blood of the lamb (Lev. xvi.) went into the presence of God, attended by a cloud of incense; so that Aaron himself was hid, and there was no man in the tabernacle of the congregation, as the holy service of putting the blood on every thing proceeded. Christ in mystery was seen, and nothing else-and the fruit of that was the bearing away of sins into the wilderness, a land not inhabited, a place of forgetfulness, where there was no voice to accuse, to judge, or to condemn, where nothing *could* be heard but the voice of that blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.

That blood, now under the eye of the Lord God, had moved His heart. Do I speak as a man? No, the word is, "The Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground." As the Saviour Himself says (in spirit bound for the altar), "Therefore doth my Father *love* me, because I lay down my life." The heart of the Lord God has sealed the acceptance of the sacrifice. It did so here, in the times of Noah.

This word that broke from the heart of the Lord God in Noah's day, the passage of the burning lamp in Abraham's day (Gen. xv.), and the answer of God to Solomon (2 Chron. i.), all witness to the value of the cross of Christ with God established. The rending of the veil from top to bottom, the breaking of the rocks,

and the bursting of the graves, witness the same, when the true offering was once and for ever accomplished. In rich variety of form and character is the acceptance of the work done in "the place that is called Calvary" testified and published-in every tongue and language, as it were, in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

And Noah becomes at once the object of fresh and multiplied blessings, blessings in glory and inheritance now, as already he had blessings in election, an acceptance of grace and the righteousness which is by faith. "God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea: into your hand they are delivered."

Noah was blessed in the new world. That blessing conveyed to him property and dominion in the earth, and the use or enjoyment of the creatures good for food. "Every moving thing that liveth" was given to him, that it might be meat for him.

Here was a large grant, as wide as the scene which lay around him. He was monarch of all he surveyed, lord, like Adam in the garden, of the new world. Instructed, however, as well as honoured and enriched-taught that the *blood* of the animal was not to be eaten with its *flesh*: "the flesh with the blood thereof, which is the life thereof, thou shalt not eat" – a principle which involves all the thoughts and counsels of God in His way with

sinner—as suited a prohibition, or limitation to the grant made to Noah now, as had been the prohibition of the tree in the midst of the garden, to the grant of all things else made to Adam.

The blood was the life, and man was not to eat it. It would have been a bold re-assuming of that which through sin he had lost, a challenge to regain life by forcing the passage kept by the sword of the cherubim. For this ordinance told the sinner, that having lost his title to the tree of life, he can never return to it in his own strength. The life has reverted to God. Blood is His. And the gospel comes to tell us how He has used it, even providing with it and through it new, eternal, infallible life for the dead sinner.

The way of God in the gospel was, therefore, rehearsed to Noah in this ordinance: "The flesh with the blood thereof, which is the life thereof, thou shalt not eat." His altar had already told us that he stood with Adam in the faith of the woman's Seed, and that that mystery was the principle of his religion and his worship. But here, while making over every thing to him for property, dominion, and use, the Lord will not pass by this great exception out of the grant; conveying, as it does, the great secret or principle of His gospel. In the changed circumstances of Adam and Noah, in the difference between an upright creature and a ruined sinner, this exception was as fitting and necessary, as I have said, as that of the tree of knowledge out of the grant of all with which the Lord, the Creator, had of old, furnished and filled the scene.

We take life from Christ who has made atonement by His blood. But we deeply own we can get it nowhere else. *We do*

not look for it elsewhere, but we refuse it not from Him. We know we were dead in trespasses and sins, but we know that we have life in Him, though only in Him. Adam learnt these things in the promise of the woman's Seed, and in the sword of the cherubim; Noah learnt them or witnessed them in his altar and in this ordinance; these things the whole book of God declares; and eternity will celebrate them.

Further, however, still-for in this blessing we find Noah with the sword of justice in his hand. His fellow-man was to be both protected and avenged. Man's person was sacred; and his life or blood, if shed by either man or beast, would be required. "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."⁶

Who does not instinctively approve of this? All that we feel judges the fitness of thus treating the person of man as sacred. While every other moving thing that lived was submitted to the use of man, his fellow-man was to be sacred in his eyes.

We instinctively approve this. But this scripture accounts for this instinct. The reason lies here-"in the image of God made He

⁶ It has been justly said by another, that the principle of *government* was represented in Noah; that Adam had been the representative head of *creation*, and that Noah is the same now of *government*. And I doubt not, that after the judicial scattering from Babel, the nations became associations in which God still recognized the sword of justice and the seat of government, which therefore are still to be exercised, and ought still to be religiously owned and revered.

man." There is a dignity in man that is entirely his own. He is the natural head of creation. Man is the possessor and governor, and not part of the conveyed inheritance, or of the delegated dominion. He is the object and not the subject of the divine grant. The instinctive verdict of our own hearts is thus divinely accounted for.

After this, however, a great subject opens before us. "With thee will I establish my covenant" had been God's word to Noah, before the ark was made, or the waters had come. vi. 18. Now that the judgment is past, and the new earth is inherited, that covenant is fully detailed, as well as pledged again to God's elect. ix. 8-17. And it is here that the word "covenant" is first used. The covenants of which we read in Scripture are all specific, having their parties and their objects well defined and plainly declared. There is no mistaking of them. Whether it be this covenant of the earth with Noah, the covenant with Abraham and his seed, the covenant of priesthood with Phinehas, or that of the throne with David, all is defined-the parties are declared and the objects set forth. Nor do these, nor any of them, I surely judge, contemplate the peculiar calling of the Church. Spiritual calling in heavenly places, and the results of oneness with Christ, are neither described nor conveyed by them. But the Scriptures of the New Testament abundantly declare a *purpose*, or a counsel, of God according to the good pleasure of His will; a mystery hid in God, before the foundation of the world, in which the Church is directly interested. See Romans xvi. 25; 1 Cor. ii. 7; Eph. i. 9;

iii. 8-11; Col. i. 26; 1 Tim. ii. 9.

The inquiry may arise, Does this purpose or counsel take the form of a covenant? Let us call it covenant, or simply a purpose taken of God; still the great and holy and august transaction itself is richly found in the New Testament. But has it, we may still ask, the character of a covenant?

I would not be careful to say that it is ever called so; but I believe we may say, that many things of a covenant nature are intimated as attaching to it. Promises are made, consideration or price contemplated, arrangements formed and fixed, and all this as between distinct parties. "In the volume of the book it is written of Me" – "I was set up from everlasting" – and such words of deepest and holiest import have their place in settling these thoughts that arise. And not only were our election, and appointment to our peculiar glory, as in predestination, matters before the world (Rom. viii. 28, 29; Eph. i. 4, 5; 1 Peter i. 2), but we were then formally or virtually given by the Father to Christ. John vi. 37, 39; x. 29; xvii. 1, 6, 8, 9, 11.

And eternal life is declared to have been promised before the world was—language which intimates Christ as a party to a blessed transaction then, and one that has covenant character in it. Titus i. 2.

I do not, then, say that this transaction is called a covenant, as God's dealing with Noah is, and His dealing with Abraham, with David, and with Phinehas; but it has these qualities, or this form of a covenant; the presence of distinct parties, considerations

and purposes all settled, and the whole confirmed and acted on. And how does the spirit of a saint welcome the blessed truth of this great eternal transaction, engaging all the Godhead in the behalf of our souls! – as we read, among other passages, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."⁷

But what strong foundations are these! what wondrous discoveries of grace! God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in counsel and in action for us! In the Gospel, man is in the place of *vision and audience only*. It is *God* that is active. The activities and sacrifices are *God's*, and the sinner has but to hear and live, to look and be saved. But these doings of God in the gospel of His grace, are the fruit (as we thus see) of precious and wondrous counsels, taken in Himself ere worlds were framed. And what, I ask, can surpass this? Can title or stability for a sinner, such as may allay all motion and uneasiness of conscience, be conceived beyond what he gets in this? Doings for him by God, and sacrifices made for him, and all this according to counsels ere worlds began! A sinner made happy (may I use this

⁷ As intimating blessed and distinct actions among the Persons of the Godhead, according to covenant arrangements, we may remember Messiah's words in Isa. xlvi. – "And now hath the Lord God and His Spirit sent me." What words! how full of deep, counselled, and ordered grace towards sinners! And they are quite according to the structure of things in the Gospels—for there not only does the baptism of Jesus but many passages tell us or show us, according to this word of the prophet, that the mission and ministry of the Lord Jesus were under the ordaining of God and the anointing of the Holy Ghost; – the Lord God and His Spirit sent the Son, the Christ or Messiah.

word?) at God's expense!

It is covenant or counselled service that Jesus has rendered us. A promise is made to Noah, that the waters shall not again prevail to destroy the earth, but this promise rests on the strong foundation of the blood of a covenant. Noah's altar had already sent up a sweet savour, a savour of rest, to God, and in the satisfaction and delight of that the Lord had said, I will not again curse the ground for man's sake. That blood was the foundation of the promise. Just as with Abraham afterwards. The land is promised to him, but it is by the covenant of Him who passes through the pieces of the sacrifice. No *promised* blessing that is not a *purchased* blessing also-no throne of grace, as we have said before, that does not stay itself on the ark of the covenant. Gen. xv. 17.

But the covenant comes with its seal, as well as with its blood. As here. There is *the bow which witnesses it* as well as *the blood which sustains it*. Wondrous thoughts keep themselves before the soul in all this! The foundation and the witness, the blood and the token, the consideration and the attestation of the great act and deed of God come to mind here. The like figure whereunto even circumcision afterwards; for as the bow in the cloud, so circumcision in the flesh, is a sign of covenant engagements.

All such signs, however, beautiful and sure as they may be, are lost when we think of the great original. For it is the Holy Ghost Himself that is now given as the great sign, the seal of our adoption, the earnest of our inheritance, the witness of the

accomplished work of Jesus, and of the acceptance of it in all its sufficiency and preciousness.

What thoughts are these! The promise of God sustained by the blood of the Son, and witnessed by the presence of the Spirit! How has God imparted Himself to us in this marvellous act and deed for sinners! The soul can conceive nothing richer. In divine activities we are interested, but such activities as are founded on everlasting counsels, and which make manifest to us and for us the name of God, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

How should it take us out of ourselves, to stand in sight of this! What a mystery it is; and what have we to do, but with Moses to "turn aside and see this great sight," turn aside from all else! The grander "this great sight" presents itself to our eye, the more commanding will it be. Let us get rich thoughts of this mystery. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will shew them His covenant." Let us see this great transaction settled ere worlds began, see it calling forth all the energies of divine love and power in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, see it undertaking the most deep and marvellous purposes of grace and glory for the elect, keep the eye on it, like Moses, till, like him, we discover Him who dwells in the midst of it, and whose name explains it all.

"Oh, all ye rich, ye wise, ye just,
Who the blood's doctrine have discussed
And judge it mean and slight-
Grant that I may, the rest's your own,
In shame and poverty sit down

At this one well-spring of delight!"

If it be but a man's covenant, there is both the consideration and the deed, the purchase money and the muniments, the price and the witness of its payment. God treats with our souls in language thus well understood, and tells us thus of the *consideration* and the *deed*, or that which *sustains* and that which *witnesses* the counsels of His sovereign good pleasure. It is a deed of gift to the elect, but it is nothing less than the blood of the Son which sustains it, and the presence of the Spirit which witnesses it.

What a secret! By nature I am at a great distance from God, an alien and a foreigner. I am also shut up, so that I cannot come forth. But in this great transaction God Himself undertook to travel this unmeasured distance, and assail the house of my strong enemy; and in His incarnation, sorrows, and victory all this mighty doing of love is accomplished, and I am "compassed about with songs of deliverance."

Can it be, as I gaze at such a mystery, that I fear lest the distant one be not brought nigh, or the captive one be not delivered? "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto me." I may say-"*Thou* art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

"Strong Deliverer!

Be Thou still our strength and shield!"

This may well be our confidence in the faith of such truth. But to these general thoughts on the covenants and their signs, I might add, the token given to Noah has a beautiful significancy. The bow, as it were, rode triumphant on the cloud. It rolled away the stone and sat upon it. Its form and bearing were those of a conqueror. It said to the cloud, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." It gave the angel of death his measure, and said to him, "It is enough, stay now thine hand."

And all this lives in the divine remembrance. The earth and the covenant that secures it are there. "The bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." Accordingly this promise to the earth is remembered, the bow in the cloud is looked at, through every stage and variety of the dispensational actings of the Lord.

It was remembered, of course, all the time the Lord had His seat in Zion, for then the glory made *the earth* its residence. The Lord then dwelt between the cherubim, in the temple at Jerusalem, in the land of Israel. But when the throne of the Lord leaves that city, and the sanctuary loses the glory, because abominations had grieved and disturbed it, the throne and the glory are accompanied by the rainbow to heaven. Ezek. i. 28. Though the earth then ceased, for a while, to be the dwelling-place of God, still it was before Him in counsel. He would be mindful of it, as the object of His faithful care, according to the

promise.⁸

And therefore when heaven is opened to our view, we see the faithful and remembered bow encompassing the throne. Rev. iv. And further still. The rainbow is seen when the Lord is presented as coming down for the direct, immediate execution of judgment. The mighty angel, the divine executor of the day of the Lord, comes down to the earth clothed with a cloud, the symbol of judgment, and the fearful vessel of wrath. Gen. ix. 14; Rev. i. 7. But even then the rainbow is with Him (Rev. x.); as much as to tell us, that to the end, and at the end, God remembers His promise to the earth, and will debate with judgment. The cloud is to descend, it is true—"They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." The judgment must sit—the books must be opened—the vials must be emptied; but it is only to take out of the kingdom them that offend—to destroy them that destroy the earth. The cloud, as it executes its commission, must stay itself at the beginning of the bow. The *day* of the Lord, or the judgment, must give place to the *presence* of the Lord, or the refreshment and restoration. Time shall be no longer, the mighty angel may cry; the present course of things may cease again, as once it did in the days of Noah; but the bow shines, in the eye of the Lord, as brightly as ever, and His promise lives in His heart. The earth

⁸ Just like the throne of David. That throne is for the present in the dust—the crown of Judah is cast down—but the promise of the Lord to it is remembered, as is His promise to the earth. This analogy Scripture giveth us in Jer. xxxiii. Dishonoured now or made the sport of the wicked, the promises to the earth and to David's throne are still in full remembrance, and, in their season, will be accomplished.

is still beloved, for Noah's sake, as Israel is for the fathers' sake—that true Noah, in whom (but in whom alone) all the promises of God are yea and amen; and of whom it shall be said, in all its fulness and truth, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed."

This earth of ours, given to the children of men, therefore outlives the judgment. It stands the shock of the descent of the mighty angel, though clothed with a cloud, planting his right foot on the sea, and his left on the earth, and crying aloud, as when a lion roareth. Rev. x.

And what is it reserved for? For more than the bow had promised it. It is not only preserved—with its seed time and harvest, its summer and winter, its day and night, its cold and heat—but it is to be delivered into "the liberty of the glory of the children of God." This is more than had been promised.

Such was the token, and such will be its acknowledgment—such was the pledge, and such will be its redemption. Beautiful mystery! The covenant, with its blood and its sign! God's promise, with the sacrifice of the Son as its foundation, and the presence of the Spirit as its witness!

But here this thought occurs to me: Are we, beloved, to stand before such ways and revelations of God in the same calmness in which they are delivered to us? Is that the thing that becomes us? The Queen of Sheba did not stand before the glories of Solomon in the same way that Solomon himself dwelt among

them. Solomon was at home in the midst of them. They were all his own. It was *his* wisdom, and *his* house that he had built. The meat of the table, and the sitting of the servants, with their apparel, were all *his*. The ascent by which he went into the house of God was his. But the Queen of Sheba, from the distant south, was but introduced to it all. Fitting it was that he should be at ease there; and fitting it was that she should be all rapture. So with the book of God and the disciple. All the profound and precious mysteries which the Spirit is unfolding there are His own—the thoughts and counsels of the divine mind. There is no effort to produce effect in the communication of them; the tale of the wonders of grace and glory is told artlessly. But is the soul, introduced to them, to be, in like manner, unmoved? Such an one may rather gaze with more of rapture than she who came from the uttermost parts of the earth, for "a greater than Solomon is here."

And it is more of this Sheba-rapture we want. We too easily afford to talk of God's things as though there were no more preciousness and excellency in them than our hearts could measure; but as secret after secret comes forth from the wisdom of the greater than Solomon, surely our souls should say, "Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom."

Endowed and blessed, enriched and honoured-instructed too, and ordained as "the power" under God, and with all this, at ease, in conscious safety, "no evil or enemy occurrent," Noah is seated

in the new world. A new trial of man, under new circumstances, was proceeding; and, as with Adam in Eden, nothing is left undone on God's part. The oxen and fatlings were killed, and all things were ready. But where is man's sufficiency? If Adam failed before him, and lost the garden; if Israel failed after him, and lost their land of milk and honey; it may be said to Noah, "Lovest thou me more than these?" In Christ, and in Him only, are unfailing fidelity and strength. And Noah, like the rest, fails, and the virgin soil of the new world is quickly tarnished by the very first foot that trod it.

"And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard, and drank of the vine, and was drunken, and he was uncovered within the tent."

Noah himself is put to shame; the very first man, the Adam of this new system, begins the history of this second apostasy, like his first father.

The "little fire" is thus kindled; but it is for "a greater matter." Noah is put to shame; but Ham, his son, glories in the shame. That was a terrible advance in the progress of evil. "Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without."

It was a terrible advance in evil; this was not simply the being "overtaken in a fault," but "rejoicing in iniquity." The common moral sense rejects this—"Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on their shoulders, went backwards, and covered the nakedness of their father." And the saint himself is soon

restored. Noah awakens from his wine. He that was overtaken recovers himself, through the Spirit, and the grace of God gives him a great triumph—a very precious and glorious triumph indeed, for the restored one judges his judge, and condemns his accuser—"Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." This is something more than recovery—it is triumphant recovery. Even the apostle's fine word, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" scarcely measures it; for that is only the silencing of the accuser, while this is turning back on the pursuer. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall rise... Then she that is mine enemy shall be trodden down as the mire of the streets."

Here, however, we may stand for a moment—the rich and interesting prospects of the Spirit of prophecy here spread themselves out before us.

This curse upon Canaan is part of Noah's prophecy. Noah, in spirit, looked out from the renewed earth, but anticipated the return of corruption and violence, though the grace of God were to have its witness in the midst of it. In detail, he saw that one branch of the human family (now about to re-people the earth) was to be distinguished by the revelation and presence of God among them; another by their success and advancement in the world—a people to be enlarged and made honourable in the earth; another, by the constant, unchanging token, in their flesh, of degradation and servitude. His prophecy contemplated, as we may say, the Asiatic, the European, and the African man; or, the

Hebrew in the East, with whom was to be the sanctuary of God-the Gentile of the West, who was, under the hand or providence of God, to make himself great in borders beyond his own-and the slave of the South, who might know a change of masters, but who was to be a slave still.

Short is the notice of the world's history, but just and perfect as far as it goes, and enough to answer the purpose of the Spirit in Noah, who was taking his son Ham for his text.

The three prophecies, which we get in these earliest times, that of Enoch, that of Lamech, and this of Noah, all touching the earth and its history, though respecting different stages or parts of that history, together present a very perfect outline of the whole thing. We must take them in this order-Noah's, Enoch's, Lamech's.

Noah's prophecy has been accomplishing from of old, and is still getting its seal and witness in all the changes of the world's solemn and interesting story. Enoch's (Jude 14), which spoke of judgment, will have its answer, its full answer, when the present course of things is closing, and the day of the Lord comes to convince the ungodly. Lamech's (Genesis v. 29), which spoke of rest, will be made good afterwards, when, "the day of the Lord" having fulfilled the judgment, "the presence of the Lord" will bring its restitution and refreshing.

The present and the future of the world's history, the varied good and evil of the present, and the judgment and the glory that are to share the future, are thus sketched before us in these

prophecies. It is easy to discern these things, and to give these early patriarchal oracles their order and character.

It is Noah's, however, that I must look at more particularly, as what we have more properly to do with here. It was delivered on the discovery of the evil of his son Ham, and the onward course of evil is then detailed to its close and maturity, ere we leave these chapters.

We have already watched the infant springing of it in Noah himself, and the advanced form of it in Ham. Its further growth is next to be seen in the builders of Babel, some hundred years after the flood. And an awful exhibition it is.

At the birth-time of this new world, Noah's altar was raised, witnessing faith and worship-but now the city and the tower are reared, witnessing defiance of God and the affected independency of man. And the answer of heaven to these things is just as different. Noah's altar brought down words and tokens of peace and security-the cry of the city and the tower now bring down judgment. Corruption here, and vengeance from on high, mark the scene, instead of worship here, and blessing from God. Then it was, that the Lord hung the bright token of His covenant in the heavens, but now He is sending abroad over the earth the witnesses of His righteous anger.

But this is not all. The tower is over-topped, high and proud as it was. The builders may be scattered, but their principles survive. Judgment does not cure. All the apostate mind that quickened that proud and rebellious confederacy, gathers itself

rapidly for its perfect work and display in one man. For soon after the scattering (it may be about thirty years) Nimrod, a grandson of Ham, plants his standard on the very spot which had witnessed the judgment of God. The beginning of his kingdom was Babel. x. 10. He unfurls his banner in the very face of Him "to whom vengeance belongs," and cries, "Where is the God of judgment?" He was as the fool of Ps. xiv. – "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." He begins to be a mighty one in the earth. "Before the Lord he hunted." In defiance of God he sought conquest and power. He added house to house and field to field, in the desire to be lord alone. Erech and Accad and Calneh are mother-cities, and mighty Nineveh with Rehoboth and Calah, and that great city Resen, are but colonies in the system of this vaunting apostate. He had no heart for any portion which God could give him. He undertook to provide for himself, to be the maker of his own fortune, that his dignity and honour should proceed from himself. And such an one is the man of the world to this day. His intellect or his industry, his skill or his courage, makes him what he is, and provides him what he cares for. Such was this distinguished apostate, this earliest representative and type of that one who, in closing days, is to do according to his will, and fill the measure of man's iniquity.

It is a serious sight for the watching and observance of our souls. Are we, beloved, waiting for other and purer scenes? and are our hearts upon such enjoyments as God can sanction, and Jesus share with us?

These chapters properly close with this—these scenes of evil and proud rebellion pass from before us, with a faint and distant view of the call of another heavenly stranger apart from the world. But all that is the dawn of another era in the ways of God, and our present subject only looks at it in the distance.

The second part of the book of Genesis, I may say, ends here. It presents a complete, distinct action, suitably following what had preceded it, and as suitably (were it my purpose to show it) introducing what is to follow it.

In this portion, Gen. vi. – xi., the scene is laid in the earth. The heavenly family have already been before us, Gen. i. – v., and their course ended in the translation of Enoch; now the scene is laid in the earth again, as at the beginning in the garden of Eden.

The contents of this little volume, which I have now closed, might be given in the following order:

vi. – viii. These chapters present the sin and judgment of the earth, with the election, faith, and deliverance of the saints in the midst of it all, and out of it all.

ix. This chapter shows us the new condition of man in the new world, endowed and enriched there by the God of heaven and earth, secured in the covenant mercy, and made the representative and executor of divine authority.

x. xi. These chapters unfold great portions of the history of the new world, the springs, workings, progress, and maturity of evil, leaving or rendering the earth such a place as that the Lord must again, a second time, retire from it (at least for the present)

and bring out from it, also a second time, a people to be heavenly strangers in the midst of it, like the antediluvian saints.

Heaven and earth have thus, in their season, been rehearsing the mystery, till together, in coming days, the days of the glory, they shall display it, when "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

"The land shall not be sold for ever," says the Lord; "for the land is mine." Lev. xxv. 23. Man has a term of years granted him, in which it is left in his power to disturb the divine order. For forty-nine years in Israel disturbing traffic might go on, but in the fiftieth year the Lord asserted His right, and restored all things according to His own mind; for it was a time of "refreshing" and of "restitution" as from His own "presence."

Bright and happy expectation! "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," is the proclamation of Psalm xxiv. And then the challenge goes forth, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" – that is, Who shall take the government of this earth and its fulness? And the answer is made by another challenge to the city gates, to lift up their heads to the Lord of hosts, the King of glory; a fervent form of words whereby to convey the truth, that the Lord, as in strength and victory, the Lord as Redeemer and Avenger, should take the government. As again in Rev. v. a like proclamation is heard, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" And the answer from every

region is this, "The Lamb that was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah." He who sat on the throne gave that answer by letting the Book pass from His hand into the hand of the Lamb. The living creatures and crowned elders joined in that answer by singing their song over the prospect of their reign over the earth. The hosts of angels add to it, by ascribing all wisdom and strength and honour and faculty of dominion unto the Lamb-and every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the seas, in their order and measure, join in uttering this same answer. The title of the Lamb to take dominion in the earth is thus owned and verified in the very place where alone all lordship or office could be rightly attested-the presence of the throne in heaven.

And so it is. The nobleman has now gone into the distant country to get for himself a kingdom. Jesus, who refused all power from the god of this world (Matt. iv.), or from the desire of the multitude (John vi.), takes it from God, as He owns in Psalm lxii. that to Him it belongs. And in due season He will return, and those who have owned Him in the day of His rejection shall shine with Him in the day of His glory; those who have served Him now shall take another city with Him then.

In the prospect of such a day, Paul says to Timothy, "Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in His time He shall show, who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." And in the like prospect the same dear apostle could say of himself, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my

course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

May the Lord give our poor hearts-for they need it much-more of the like spirit of faith and power of hope! Amen.

ABRAHAM.

GENESIS XII. – XXV

In earlier parts of the book of Genesis, I have already traced two distinct histories-that of the antediluvian saints, or the times from Adam to Enoch; and that of Noah and of those who followed him, down to the scattering of the nations.

The first of these histories occupies chapters i. – v., the second, vi. – xi.

In the chapter which follows-xii. – the story of Abraham begins, and is continued down to chap. xxv. This forms the third portion or section of the book of Genesis, and presents to us a new era in the ways of God. And in all this, I am sure, there is beautiful moral order, and an unfolding of the dispensational wisdom of God. For in these things the heavens and the earth are made, by turns, to take up the wondrous tale of that wisdom, and to rehearse divine mysteries-such mysteries as, "in the fulness of time," will be accomplished, when, as we know, He shall gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. Eph. i. 10.

Adam in innocency was a man of the earth. He had to enjoy it, knowing it all as his, but knowing nothing as his beside. But when he was sent out of Eden, he became a stranger in the earth. He received no commission to improve or furnish it. He had simply

to till the ground for a living, and the translation of Enoch tells us, that the destiny and inheritance of that earliest household of God was *heavenly*.⁹

In Noah, however, in process of time, the purpose of God is different. Noah is a man of the earth again. He leaves the ark in a character very different from that in which Adam had left the garden. Noah left the ark under commission to keep the world in order, as judge and ruler. It was not strangership on it, but citizenship in it, and government of it, that was now again the divine thought. But a second apostasy was witnessed in the midst of Noah's descendants. In process of time, they affected independency in the earth, casting off the fear of God, and seeking to do for themselves without Him, as Adam had (seeking to be as God) in the garden of old.

Abraham, upon all this, finds grace in the eyes of the Lord. He is called out from this apostate scene; and, as we might expect, from this alternate telling of heavenly and earthly mysteries, after Noah the man of the earth, Abraham is called to be a heavenly man.

The Lord said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house." This was the character of the call of Abraham. It was not a call from moral pollution,

⁹ The family of Cain was the contradiction of this, in those antediluvian days. They tilled the ground for something more than livelihood. Their tillage led to the culture and advancement of the world as a system of gain and pleasure. And thus were the two families distinguished—the one was formed by faith, or by obedience to the revelation of God; the other by the despite of it, as the world is to this day.

or from idolatry, or the like; it was a call from the associations of nature and of the earth. There were idols to be left, I doubt not. See Joshua xxiv. 2, 3. But it was not the leaving of them that constituted the nature of the call. Yet Abraham, touching the earth, was to be like Adam outside the garden. He leaves Ur of the Chaldees, as Adam left Eden. He received no commission to cultivate the land of Canaan for the Lord, or to conquer and govern the people there. The arrangements of the world were left just as they were. Abraham had nothing to say to the nations through which he passed on his way to Canaan; and when he reached that land, he found the Canaanite there, and there he left him as he found him.

Government had been set up in Noah, and nations had been organized; as natural relationships had been instituted at the beginning, or in Adam. But Abraham is called from all this. God Himself is received by faith; and the things of nature which Adam might have conveyed to him, or the things of government which Noah might have secured to him, are left behind.¹⁰

In our patriarch, then, we see the election and the call of God. He was of the corrupt, departed family of man, without a single claim on God. But sovereign grace (in the virtue of which all the redeemed, according to eternal counsel, stand) had made him its

¹⁰ In their day, Abraham's seed, or the nation of Israel, are again an *earthly* people; and they exhibit the very opposite of all this. They *smite* the nations of Canaan; and instead of being called *from* kindred and country, they are called *to* all such things; men, women, children, and even cattle (for not a hoof was to be left behind), journeyed from Egypt to Canaan—from a land of strangers to their own inheritance.

object; and under such grace he is, in due time, manifested as a chosen one, and is called of God to be a heavenly stranger in the world. Scripture speaks of him as the father of all them that believe. Rom. iv. We may, therefore, expect to find the life of faith exhibited in him; and so we do find it, as this little book designs to show.

But in this "life of faith" we do not merely look for the principle of dependence on God, or of confidence in Him, though that may be the thought immediately suggested by such words. It signifies much more. It is a life of large and various energies; for according to God, or Scripture, faith is that principle in the soul which not only trusts Him and believes Him; it is also that which apprehends His way, acts in concert with His principles and purposes, receives His promises, enjoys His favour, does His bidding, looks for His kingdom, in His strength gains victories, and by His light walks in light; and thus it is ever, though variously, exhibiting a life according to Him, or formed by communion with Him.

All this is strongly marked for our observation.

Heb. xi. shows us all this—the life of faith in its vast diversity of exercise and action. Accordingly, we shall find, in the life of Abraham, occasions where confidence in God was the virtue exercised; occasions, too, where strength was put forth and conflict endured; and again, where surrender of rights and submission to wrongs were the virtues. And the life of faith is beautiful in its variety; for this variety is but the changeful

glowing of the same mind, the mind of Christ, in the saint.

But again. We are not to understand that we get *nothing else* than this light and power of faith in the believer or saint. Perfectness in this variety of the life of faith is not to be found save in Him who is set before us as "the Author and Finisher of faith," and whose way, from beginning to end, and in every incident of it, was the great exemplar of this life in full unsullied brightness. Still, however, the life of Abraham, or of David, or of Joseph, or of Paul, is to be called the life of faith; for it was the life of those in whom that principle was, though betraying again and again, and that too in different ways, the pravity of nature, the workings of unbelief, and the counsels of a heart prone to converse with flesh and blood, and to take the way of a revolted world.

This life of faith our Abraham entered upon with beautiful simplicity and earnestness. "He went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan he came." He went out, not knowing whither he went. He took God for his security and his portion; and, as another has said, "it is in this that the Spirit of God rests, as characteristic of his approved faith; for, by separation from the world, on the ground of implicit confidence in God, he lost everything, and got nothing but *the word of God.*"

We do not like such conditions. The heart resents them; but the renewed mind approves them, and justifies God in them. The *sufferings* of Christ are first, and then the *glories*. 1 Peter i. 11. Job was nearer his good thing in God, when he lay in ashes amid

the potsherds, than when he was happy in his nest. Israel did not descend Mount Lebanon, and enter Canaan after a fruitful journey, through a land of cities and villages, and corn and wine, and rivers and vineyards; but they paced it slowly, through one desert after another. And so Abraham was called out from all, to go he knew not whither; but this he knew, that it was God who had called him. And this was faith's beginning. "He went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan he came."

He came, however, rather to sojourn than to dwell there. He moves from place to place, and in every place it is but a tent he pitches. He had been told by the God of glory, that the land should be *shown* him. He should *have* it in *his seed* for ever, but in *his own person* he was but to *see* it. And, accordingly, we find him *surveying it carefully*, but not *occupying any of it*. For this was the right answer of such a promise. He *looked* on the land, because the promise was that it should be *shown* him. He went first to Sichem and to the plain of Moreh; from thence, southward, to the neighbourhood of Bethel and Ai. But he was a man of the tent, and of the tent only, wherever he went. The Canaanite was then in the land, and he was the occupier of the soil; and Abraham did not dispute with him for a foot's breadth of it. He surveyed it, and had such possession of it as faith and hope imparted; but he sought no personal, present inheritance there. The promise lived in his heart, and the promise was his measure as well as his joy.

Chapter xii.

Quickly, however, another man in our Abraham is before us; for, like all of us, beloved, he was a man of *nature*, as he was a man of God; and there is none perfect in the life of faith, as we said before, but the Master Himself. Famine touches the land into which the call of God had brought him. A strange surprise this may well be thought to have been. But faith would have been equal to it. Faith in Paul was equal to a like surprise. Called into Macedonia by the voice of God, a prison awaited him. But Paul stands the shock, though Abraham falls before it. Paul and his companion sing hymns in the prison in Macedonia; but Abraham practises a lie, seeking help from the famine of Canaan in another land, of which his call under the God of glory had made no mention whatever.

Such things have been, and still are, found among the saints. There are "Little Faith" and "Great Heart" among the elect, as well as flesh and spirit-nature and the new mind in each of them. But this we may know: that if nature *rule* us, nature will *expose* us. Even the man of the earth, Pharaoh of Egypt, puts Abraham to shame; and his journey, instead of being onward in the witness of his tent and in the joy of his altar, was that of a wearied foot, because it was that of a rebuking heart. He has to "do his first works," to retrace his steps, and regain his standing-sorrowful works at all times. He has to leave "by-path meadow" for the King's highway again, betaking himself back from Egypt to the place between Ai and Bethel, where he had raised his altar at the first.

What say we to this, beloved? The flocks got in Egypt accompany him home. The glitter of the gold and the silver-the offerings of a land that lay beyond where the God of glory had called him-adorn and set off his return. All this is so indeed. But what say we to all this? again I ask. Is the bleating and the lowing of such flocks and herds in our ears like the soft music of an approving conscience? or this glittering wealth like the brightness of the divine presence which was now lost to Abraham? I am bold to answer for Abraham, though I may not for myself, that his spirit knew the difference. The wearied heart was but feebly relieved by all that he brought with him from the land of Egypt, or out of the house of Pharaoh. Sure I am of this. It could not but be so with such a man. "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul," must have been his experience; and his action in the scene which immediately succeeds, as I judge, tells us something of this.

Lot, his younger brother, or his brother's son, who had come with him out of Ur into Canaan, now becomes the occasion of trial to Abraham, as the famine had lately been. But faith in Abraham triumphs, I may say, to admiration. The very style in which he gives this trial its answer seems to say, that he will return fourfold to the life of faith for that which nature had so lately, as it were, taken away from it. The herdmen of the two brothers, the elder and the younger, cannot feed their flocks together. They must separate. This was the occasion of trial which had now arisen. But "let Lot choose," is Abraham's language. In a fine

sense, he will act on the divine oracle, "the elder shall serve the younger." Lot may choose, and leave Abraham what portion he please. The well-watered plains may be his; Abraham can trust the Lord of the country, though he lose them. He may have to *dig* wells instead of *finding* them; but it is better to dig for them in the strength of God, than to find them in the way of covetousness; better, as it were, to wait for them in Canaan, than to go after them again down to Egypt. xiii.

This is beautiful recovery. And in this way will faith, at times, exercise judgment on unbelief, and clear itself again. And now the Lord visits him, as He had not, as He could not, have done in Egypt. The God of glory, who had called Abraham into Canaan, could not go with him into Egypt: but to the man who was surrendering the best of the land to his younger brother, in the joy of restored confidence in God, He will delight to show Himself.

Where, then, are we, beloved? I will ask. Where is our spirit? On which road with Abraham are we, as at this moment, travelling? Are we knowing Egypt in the bitterness of self-reproach, or a regained Canaan in the joy of God's countenance? Is it a walk with God we are taking every day? The life of faith knows the difference between the checks of the worldly mind and the enlargements of the believing mind. Abraham knew these things. He knew, in spirit, what Egypt was—the place of gold and of silver, and of rebuke and death; he knew what it was to regain Ai without an altar on the road; and he knew what it was to rest again, with altar and tent, in the plains of Mamre.

Thus the chequered life of faith begins. But there is vastly more in it than this. And in this variety of action in the life of faith, we notice its *intelligence*, the exercise of the mind of Christ, or of the spiritual sense, which discerns things that differ, which has capacity to know times and seasons according to God. This fine endowment of the saint we find in Abraham, in the next passage of his history.

The battle of the kings is recorded in chap. xiv. While that was a mere contest between such, Abraham has nothing to say to it. Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds. But as soon as he hears that his kinsman Lot is involved in that struggle, he stirs himself.

Everything, as we read, is beautiful in its season. There is a time to build, and a time to pull down. There was a time for Abraham to be still, and a time for Abraham to be active; a time to be silent, and a time to break silence. And he understood the time. Like the men of Issachar afterwards, he knew the time, and what Israel ought to do. God's principles were Abraham's rules. Lot was taken prisoner, and the kinsman's part was now Abraham's duty. The battle-field in the vale of Siddim shall be his now, as the tent had been his till now in the plains of Mamre. The mind of God had another lesson for him than that which he learnt while the potsherds of the earth were alone in the conflict; and a time to break silence calls him out at the head of his trained servants.

Excellent and beautiful indeed in a saint is this intelligence

of the mind of Christ, and beautiful is everything in its season. Out of season the very same action is defiled and disfigured. For the *material* of an action is not enough to determine the *character* of an action. It must be *seasonable* likewise. Elijah, from his elevation, may call down fire from heaven on the captains and their fifties; and so, the two witnesses, in the day of Rev. xi. But it will not do for the companions of the lowly, rejected Jesus to act thus on the Samaritan villagers. Luke ix. It is only in its season that anything is really right. How was the garden of Gethsemane (made sacred as it was by the sorrows of the Lord Jesus) disfigured by the blood which Peter's sword drew there! What a stain on that soil, though the power of Christ was present to remove it! But another sword was doing right service when it hewed Agag in pieces. For when vengeance is demanded, when the trumpet of the sanctuary sounds an alarm for war, vengeance or war will be as perfect as grace and suffering. It is for God to determine the dispensational way, and to make known the dispensational truth. That being done, all life of faith is just that manner or order or character of life that is according to it. "The duties and services of faith flow from truths entrusted. If the truths be neglected, the duties or services cannot be fulfilled." And the good pleasure of God, or His revealed and dispensed wisdom, varies in changing and advancing ages. Noah, in a few generations before Abraham, would have avenged the blood of one made in the likeness or image of God, in the same spirit of faith, as Abraham allowed one army of confederate kings to slay

another. It is neither the "sword" nor the "garment," as the Lord speaks in Luke xxii., that must needs be the due instrument of service, or symbol of faith; but either of them, according as it severally expresses the dispensational good pleasure of God at the time.

This is much to be observed; for the distinguishing of things that differ, and the rightly dividing of the word of God or of truth, is expected, among other virtues, in the life of faith. Abraham was endowed with this fine faculty. He walked in the light of that day, as God was in the light. He knew the voice of the silver trumpet; when, as it were, to gather to the tabernacle, and when to go forth to the battle.

But there is more than this in our patriarch at this time. Two victories distinguish him—one over the armies of the kings, and one over the offers of the king of Sodom.

The first of these Abraham gained, because he struck the blow exactly in God's time. He went out to the battle neither sooner nor later than God would have had him. He waited, as it were, till "he heard the going in the mulberry trees." Victory was therefore sure; for the battle was the Lord's, not his. His arm was braced by the Lord; and this victory of Abraham's was that of an earlier sling and stone, or of the jaw-bone of an ass, or of a Jonathan and his armour-bearer against a Philistine host; for Abraham's was but a *band of trained servants against the armies of four confederated kings*.

The second, still brighter than the first, was achieved in virtue

of fellowship with the very springs of divine strength. The *spirit* of the patriarch was in victory here, as his *arm* had been before. He had so drunk in the communication of the King of Salem—had so fed on the bread and wine of that royal, priestly stranger—that the king of Sodom spread out his feast in vain. The soul of Abraham *had been in heaven*

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