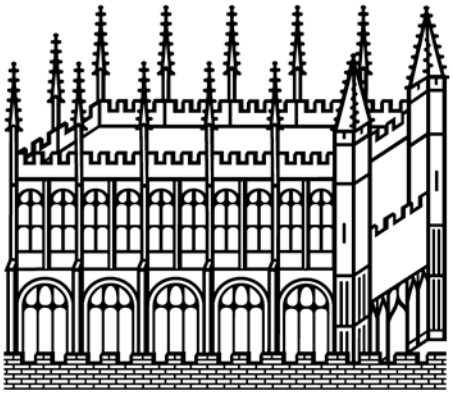


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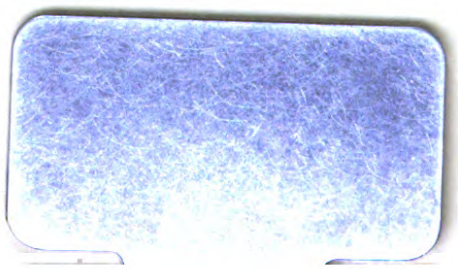


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DAVID

King of Israel

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DAVID
THE KING OF ISRAEL.

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THE KING OF ISRAEL.

BY

BENJAMIN WILLS NEWTON.

Second Edition, Revised.



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THE first edition of this work was published upwards of twenty years ago. The present edition has been revised throughout, but has not been materially altered. The chief difference between this and the first edition is the addition of a new chapter on "The Threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite," with appended Notes on the Thirtieth Psalm.

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DAVID.

UNCONDITIONAL promise, *wholly* dependent for its accomplishment on GOD, is the only resource available for a being thoroughly ruined like man. The power of secure and certified blessing was established in the earth from the moment that God unconditionally said to Abraham, "Blessing, I WILL bless thee." That which is thus freely and unconditionally promised, is not earned; neither can it be forfeited. The means and the end are alike secure; for they depend on God, whose faithfulness cannot swerve; and whose power, seeing that it is almighty, cannot fail. Such was the character of Abraham's blessing. He received it not by works of righteousness which he had done, but through faith, for he was justified as "ungodly." His was "the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works."

But whilst the history of Abraham and that of his immediate descendants, exhibits the blessedness of those for whom God undertakes the responsibility of accomplishing His promises, the corporate history of Israel subsequently, affords a far different lesson. Ignorant equally of God and of their own hearts, they took upon themselves, at Sinai, the responsi-

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bility of earning by *their* faithfulness to God, blessings which, in His covenant with their fathers, God had made dependent on *His* faithfulness to them. As far as in them lay they abrogated the covenant of grace; and made not God, but themselves, the pillar of their future hopes. True indeed, that covenant has not been really cancelled, as the future corporate history of Israel will by and by abundantly testify; but from Sinai to this present hour, their collective history has fearfully manifested what man becomes when he takes upon himself the responsibility of obtaining and preserving his own blessings. Laws outraged as soon as received, and mercies forfeited as soon as given, have been and are the characteristics of Israel's history; nor is the cup of their evil and calamity yet full.

Nevertheless, there is many an evidence that Israel have been and still are God's people, "beloved for the fathers' sakes." Though divided amongst all nations, and scattered to the four winds of Heaven, they still remain a separate and peculiar people. There has ever been amongst them, in every age, a remnant according to the election of grace. We still turn to their recorded history as supplying the types and pledges of mercies to be fulfilled in Him in whom all nations shall be at last fully blessed. The interventions of God on their behalf terminated not in the temporary blessing which was their immediate result—they were, and they are, the indications and the pledges of blessings yet to come, in Heaven as well as earth. When we read

of Joshua, and David, and Solomon, do we think merely of *them*, or do we see in their histories the prophetic record of an everlasting day? To Israel's history alone belongs this prerogative of instruction as to the future. Fruitful in testimony to Christ, it teaches us either His personal excellency and glory; or else instructs us as to the manner in which His Spirit acts amongst His people, whilst the conflict between Truth and falsehood, between God and the Deceiver, yet continues. The darkest periods of Israel's recorded history have thus in them a light which *grace* has kindled, and which no circumstances shall quench, until it merges in the brightness of the final day.

The call of David to kingship over Israel was one especial instance of these interventions of God's mercy. Kingship, like Priesthood, was an office necessary to the welfare of His people. Whether exercised, as by Moses and David, in leading *from* difficulty and danger *towards* rest, or as held by Solomon in the midst of peace attained, with every enemy silenced, and every difficulty overcome—kingship is, in either case, essential to the welfare of those who need direction as well as gift—control as well as endowment. Mercies bestowed are not without corresponding responsibilities; and if such mercies happen to be received in an evil day in the midst of threatening enemies, a directive hand is the more needed to guide, to encourage, and to rule. To kingship, under such circumstances, David was called.

In order to estimate aright the period at which David lived, we may briefly retrace the previous history of Israel, remembering that the things that happened unto them happened as ensamples, and are recorded as admonitions to us, who live in a dispensation so fearfully analogous in circumstances of disastrous failure.

Israel when called out of Egypt and constituted God's people, were designed to serve under Him as their banner, against His enemies—enemies respecting whom He had sworn, saying, that He would "have war with them from generation to generation." But besides their being thus called to be "the host of the Lord," they were also His *priestly* people. The oracles of God and the service of God were committed to *them*, whilst darkness rested on the whole earth besides. They had a Priesthood, whose lips were to keep knowledge, that the people might learn from them the ways of the Lord of hosts. But what had been the result of all these privileges? The Priesthood in the house of Eli had so failed—had so become the minister of sin, that men, instead of being taught the ways of God, had turned in disgust away, and had learned to abhor the offering of the Lord. And as to their foes, they, instead of being subdued, had mightily increased in number and in power, and were vexing Israel on every side. The Ark of God had been taken; and though it had not been permitted to remain to grace the house of Dagon, yet it stood neglected and forgotten on the outskirts of Israel.

Israel were not so blinded as to be wholly unconscious of the darkness of this picture. They recognised that their condition was disastrous, and they sought after a remedy; but they sought it not in God. The character and the direction of their energies alike needed to be changed—thoroughly changed, and this God could have effected. He could have moulded them anew. But Israel desired not this. They wished that their present energies should be stimulated, not altered, and hoped that development would accomplish that which could only be effected by radical change. Accordingly, they asked for a king—one morally, like unto themselves, who might develop and direct their powers, such as they then were; and God granted their desire. He gave them a king, noble in stature, and fair in form, one whom nature could thoroughly admire; excellent as Esau in the eyes of Isaac; and Israel welcomed him. Possessed of every natural advantage, fully endowed by God with the authority that attached to the headship of His people; aided, too, by that miraculous agency that was then officially connected with the throne of Israel, counselled by Samuel, favoured by the people, Saul entered on the headship of Israel abundantly supplied with all instrumental means for the service of the truth, and people of God, one thing only being wanting—a heart to confide in and wait on God. But that want was fatal, for it caused supremacy to be given to nature, not to God. Saul ruled in the power of nature. His own thoughts, his own appre-

hensions of expediency, were his guide. God had expressly commanded that the Amalekites should be utterly destroyed: but it seemed best to Saul that some of them should be spared, and they *were* spared. He thought it expedient that the Gibeonites should be slaughtered, and they *were* slaughtered, despite the solemn pledge that all Israel had given for their preservation. His energies, which were not less than his endowments, were ever employed in cherishing things that God hated, and in persecuting that which God loved; and they left him, at last, prostrate at the feet of the witch of Endor—forsaken of God, too weak to stand alone, and therefore the servant of sorceries and demons. Such was, and such ever will be, the end of the unsanctified energies of nature when seeking to preside over the people, or the truths of God. Saul indeed has passed away: his history has ended as a tale that is told, but Israel and Christendom remain. Their history will yet again exhibit the end of Saul-like principles, and Saul-like deeds.

But the progress of evil, and the infliction of judgment thereon, are not instantaneous—for God is long-suffering. His eye had long discerned the character of Saul's evil course, and His prophet had given the fullest warning. Nevertheless, all *ostensible* authority and *official* calling of God remained with Saul, even long after Samuel had pronounced his doom. *There*, consequently, all who judged by the outward appearance would still have believed the favour of the God of Israel to be. Yet *there* it

was not. Just as before, when the strength of God's people was being wasted under Pharaoh, Moses, their deliverer, was hidden as a shepherd in a wilderness; so, when Israel was again found in circumstances of deeper, though less ostensible, peril (deeper because the fountain-head of influence in Israel itself was poisoned) we again find the hope of Israel concealed in the unknown shepherd of an humble flock—one not deemed worthy even by his father to be presented with the rest of his household before the prophet of God. "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. and Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither." Such is the first mention of David the king of Israel. "He chose David, also, his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young, He brought him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands"—words true indeed of David, but having respect also to One greater than he.

An incident is recorded of the shepherd life of David that sufficiently marked his character, and his destiny. He thus narrated it to Saul: "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose

against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear." Here were both energy and courage, two needful qualifications for a king; but then it was an energy and courage that drew its resources from God. David took care to add, "*The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear.*" And what was the occasion that drew forth this energy, and this faith? The loss of one poor lamb. Other shepherds might have deemed the loss trivial, and thought themselves happy in their own escape; but David had the heart of a true shepherd, and it becomes a shepherd to care for and to love his sheep. Should a shepherd quietly behold a lamb devoured before his eyes? Love to the lamb, and faithfulness to his charge, alike required that he should act. But how could he meet so terrible a foe? How could a lonely stripling encounter a lion and a bear? He could not, save in faith towards God. But David was of faith. He trusted in God, and triumphed. The enemy was overcome—the lamb delivered, and himself strengthened and encouraged for the future. Experience of God's mercies worketh hope for the future, a hope that maketh not ashamed.

This early occurrence in the life of David sufficiently indicated his future destiny. His path was to be one of conflict, but one of triumph. In later periods of Israel's history, when the results of their manifold transgressions were finally settling in upon them, the servants of God, such as Zerubbabel,

attained in their lowly and limited sphere of service a measure of success; but there were no triumphs as in the day of David—no recovery of universal Israel—no catholic psalms of victory. Endurance, not triumph, was the characteristic of their service. God's power supported them, but no miracles were wrought on their behalf—the human eye saw in their path nothing that it admired, much that it despised; and none but a remnant of Israel were ever associated with their service. But it was otherwise with David. He was appointed to triumph, and all Israel were to triumph with him. His course was to foreshadow the end of those conflicts which shall result in the reign of the Prince of Peace being established for ever. Nevertheless, the principles which sustained Zerubbabel in his apparently unrequited sorrows were not really different from those which carried David through suffering to a Throne.

Very soon after his victory over the lion and the bear, David, sent on an humble errand to the camp of Israel, found them all quailing before Goliah. It was not now a question of danger to a lamb of his flock—he beheld the armies of the living God trembling before the threats of a Philistine. The personal danger to himself was not so imminent as when the lion and the bear descended on his fold; but the emergency was greater, for *Israel* was in jeopardy, and the name of the God of Israel was dishonoured. Saul, the ostensible shepherd of God's people, found himself unable to confront the danger:

no tongue responded to the challenge of the Philistine—no arm was raised in behalf of God's people, or God's truth; the energies of Israel seemed paralysed; their strength gone; their glory departed. But there was yet one person in whom the spirit of the true Shepherd of Israel dwelt. David, remembering the lion and the bear—remembering that the Lord his God had not failed to help him when the danger was less, and the loss trivial, judged that he might safely confide in the same faithful God, now that the danger concerned His people, and the honour of His own great name. Besides, if the heart of David had been moved by the danger of a lamb, was the danger of David likely to be an object of less solicitude to the Shepherd of Israel?

I need not dwell on the well-known circumstances of David's conflict with his mighty adversary. Goliah fell before the sling and the stone. The sling was, no doubt, an apt instrument in the hand of David; but he would as soon have thought of trusting in the unproved armour of Saul, as in the skill of his own practised hand. He trusted in God. He trusted not his own skill. God directed his hand, and the stone was guided to Goliah's brow. "Thou comest to me," said David, "with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand." Thus Israel was delivered.

It would have been happy for David if the cause

of Israel's sorrows had lain merely in the strength of their external enemies. How little such strength could avail against weakness, when that weakness was connected with God, was shown in the fall of Goliah. The real secret of Israel's weakness was their own abandonment of God. Nor was it merely as when in former days, they groaned in captivity under Midian, Moab, and the like. Their condition then was rather characterised by the inertness and listlessness of despair, than by activity of evil. But it was otherwise under Saul. He was himself energetic, and he stimulated the energies of Israel in a course contrary to God. David soon found that Israel, whilst thus guided, could be no more used against the Philistines, than could the armour of Saul; indeed, that Israel's present head was a foe more to be dreaded than the Philistines themselves. He had not merely to cope with apathy and indifference; he found an energy in Israel turned in active hostility upon himself.

The immediate cause of the hostility of Saul to David was the unwise song of the women of Israel. David, it is said, "behaved himself WISELY;" was scrupulously obedient to Saul, and "went out whithersoever Saul sent him; and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants." Thus far, Saul favoured David; but when the women came out of all the cities of Israel, and sang, saying, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," the anger and jea-

lousy of Saul were effectually kindled. If the women had made mention of the name of the Lord, if they had said with Miriam, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously;" or with Deborah, "Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes: I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel"—if they had given to the name of the Lord the same prominence they gave to the name of David, the result might have been different. But they made no mention of the Lord; they spoke only of David. Nature in them, acted on nature in Saul, and he "eyed David from that day and forward."

The folly or evil of men is, not unfrequently, used by God for the accomplishment of His own wise purposes. He might easily have restrained the song of the women, or obviated its effect on the heart of Saul: and if there had been anything in the ways of Saul with which David, as God's servant, could rightly have continued in association, His almighty power would doubtless have so ordered it; for He is "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil." But it pleased God to appoint that the purposes of Saul should ripen. Israel, and through them, God's people in every age, were, in Saul, to learn the difference of power directed by nature, and power directed by faith. Israel (and that, at a time when they most needed to have their steps guided aright) were not only to be separated from the man after God's own heart, but were to be set in deadly hostility

against him. The Israelite and the Philistine were to find one point of common interest in their hatred and persecution of him whom God had chosen.

During the time that David remained in connection with the household of Saul, abundant opportunity was afforded to all in Israel, to become acquainted with him and with his ways. He went in and out among them. He fought their battles, and subdued their enemies. The snares laid for him by Saul ended only in accumulating fresh honours on his head—valueless indeed to him, except as attesting his character, and supplying him with the more to renounce, for the Lord's sake, when he retired into the wilderness. None therefore, in Israel, could say that they had no opportunity of knowing David. They *had* opportunity, and the conscience of Israel bore witness to his worth; they knew that God was with him. Yet, in the day of his distress, when penury, and danger, and the wilderness were his portion, who joined him? Conscientious conviction, or perhaps affection, might incline towards David; but then, honour and dignity, and wealth, and royalty were with Saul; and when weighed against such things, David's interests, and David's sorrows were but as dust in the balance. What madness to resign the courts of Saul for the cave of Adullum—to dwell with outcasts, and to forsake princes!

David, therefore, when he found it necessary to quit the house of Saul, stood emphatically alone. He became a solitary wanderer. "Then came David

to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, 'Why art thou ALONE, and no man with thee?'" It was strange in the eyes of Ahimelech, that the conqueror of Goliah—the captain of the mighty men of Saul—the son-in-law of the king, should be found *alone*. It was strange and sorrowful to David, too, and his heart began to quail under it; for danger and difficulty surrounded him. He had often, indeed, before known difficulty and danger: from the day of his conflict with Goliah he had known little else: but then, there was this difference,—in former difficulties he had been enabled to triumph. Some ray of brightness had gilded every cloud; some honour awaited him out of each affliction. But now, God seemed no longer to interfere on his behalf. The fell enmity of Saul was allowed to take its course; and God interfered not, either to subdue or to chasten. He appeared no longer to intend to raise David above circumstances, but to allow him to be overcome by them. David's heart seemed unable to bear this. To trust God whilst overcoming is one thing—to trust Him when being overcome is another.

Accordingly, David's faith—that faith which had stood so many trials, and had so often triumphed, David's faith gave way. When Ahimelech suddenly said to him, "Why art thou *alone?*" he answered by a lie. David said unto Ahimelech, "The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the busi-

ness whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place." Ahimelech, little suspecting a lie from the lips of David, was effectually deceived—deceived, too, unto his ruin. David had certain requests to make to Ahimelech, and he made them (for his wisdom seemed to have forsaken him) whilst an Edomite, a servant and friend of Saul, was standing by; and Ahimelech, still suspecting nothing, acquiesced—an acquiescence which proved his ruin. The Edomite informed Saul, and was by him sent forth upon the glad work of vengeance, Ahimelech, and fourscore and five persons beside, who wore the priestly ephod, were slain, "and Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword." Such were some of the results of David's lie; even as he afterwards acknowledged to the one remaining child of Ahimelech, "*I*," said he, "have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house." Have we never known occasions on which the spirit of the Edomite has stimulated the natural energies of those who call themselves (and, perhaps, are) Christ's servants, to deeds of violence and persecution?

The request of David was twofold. He asked for the shew-bread, and he asked for Goliah's sword. Although the shew-bread was not allowed to be eaten by any except the priests, yet his petition for *it* was one capable of being preferred rightly, and

in faith. It only argued acquaintance with the mercy and loving-kindness of God, to be assured that God would permit a ritual ordinance to be violated in order that the need of one of his distressed and persecuted servants might be relieved. The sins of Israel and of Saul, that had well nigh violated all His precepts, and destroyed all His ordinances, had instrumentally caused the distress of David; and now, if it were necessary that a ritual ordinance should be broken in order to meet the need of David, it was only another evidence of the effect of Israel's sin. The Lord has Himself declared that David ate of the shew-bread, and was guiltless. He might, therefore, have asked for the shew-bread in faith; but we can scarcely conceive any circumstances in which it could have been an act of faith to ask for Goliah's sword. That sword had been laid up behind the ephod—a memorial of the power and goodness of Him, through whom it had been won, and there it might fitly have remained. It well beseemed the place of votive offering: but surely, it augured ill for David, that *his* hand—that hand which had placed the sword of Goliah in the sanctuary of the God of Israel—that hand which had once taken the pebble and the sling as the symbol of its strength, because it trusted in the Lord of hosts,—it augured ill that his hand should be the first to withdraw the giant weapon from its resting-place in order that he might transfer to *it* a measure, at least, of that confidence which he was withdrawing from God. How different the con-

dition of David now, and on the day of Goliah's fall! Then, trusting in the God of Israel, and associated with Israel, he had gone out in avowed weakness; but now, forsaking Israel and the land of Israel, he went forth armed with the sword of Goliah, to seek friendship and alliance with the Philistines, the enemies of Israel, and the enemies of God.

Unmoved however, by these things, and apparently unconscious of his sin, David pursued his way. Common prudence might have taught him, that, if he sought the friendship of Philistines, the sword of Goliah was not the most likely instrument whereby to conciliate their favour. But David's wisdom seemed to have departed. He entered the country of the Philistines, and went to Achish, the King of Gath. As might have been expected, the jealousy of the Philistines was instantly aroused. They, too, remembered the song of the women. They said, "Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" David instantly comprehended his danger, "and was sore afraid." "And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard." Such was the condition into which David had sunk himself. Saul himself could scarcely have wished for him a deeper degradation. "Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me?

Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?" So Abimelech "drove him away, and he departed." (See Ps. xxxiv.) Such were the means, which the secret providence of God employed, to screen His servant from that threatening danger. "David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave of Adullam."

The Spirit of God has not left us without a record of the feelings with which his repentant and chastened servant entered the cave of Adullam. One of the Psalms bears this superscription—"A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Achish (margin), who drove him away, and he departed." (Ps. xxxiv.) The cup of sorrow which he had been made to drink, had broken his strong spirit; and he could now say, as he could not have said before, "The Lord is nigh unto them that be of a broken heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit." If he had dreamed of rest or prosperity among the Philistines; if he had thought that they would have rejoiced in gaining the champion of Israel to themselves; if he had nurtured in his heart thoughts of vengeance against any in Israel, or against Saul—if by these means he had sought to sustain his spirit in the hour of adversity, the resource had failed. The reed had broken, and run into his hand, and pierced it. He found that it was a bitter thing and evil to have forsaken the living God—his own tried and faithful friend. His

heart hastened back to him again, and the Lord refused not to be found of him. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. O fear the Lord, ye His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Such were the words in which David described the joy of returning unto the rest of his soul. Almost every verse in the Psalm mentions the name of the Lord as the object of his confidence, and hope, and joy—for it was from the Lord that he had departed. Yet, it was not the joy of an unhumbled heart. He could experimentally speak of a "contrite spirit." He had learned a new lesson in the fear of the Lord, and desired humbly to teach it to others. "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good: seek peace, and pursue it." He had proved the evil of lying lips and a deceitful tongue, and now was able

to warn others of the pitfall into which he had fallen: but he warned, not as one left to reap the harvest of his doings, but as one who could say, "The Lord redeemeth the soul of His servants: and none of those that trust in Him shall be desolate." Such were the feelings—such the experience with which David entered his habitation in the wilderness.

In the cave of Adullam, he was to learn new lessons of dependence on God. It would have been easy for God to have put forth His power, and subjected the enemies of David, and granted to him rest. It would have been easy for God to have done this; and this is what David's nature would have desired. But God had designs other than the mere exaltation of David. He intended to allow the evil of Saul and of Israel to exhibit itself. He intended to give to David some apprehension of the character of his own heart, and to cause him to learn subjection to a wisdom greater than his own. He intended also, to prove the hearts of His own people in Israel; and to try how many among them would discern, that the cave of Adullam was the only true place of excellency and honour in Israel.

But who joined him in the cave of Adullam? His brethren and his father's house did go thither to him. But did Jonathan join him there, or any of the great in Israel? Did Israel's princes, or any of them to whom David's tastes or affections may be supposed to have inclined, did such join him? No; "every one that was in distress, and every one that

was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him." Such were by their disasters placed virtually without the order of Israel: but all who were under that order (so systematised had its evil become) were so poisoned by its influence, or else so cramped and fettered by its power, that they either lacked sensibility to discern the difference between the ways of Saul and the ways of David, or were without energy to act. Here indeed was one of the great sorrows of David. To be separated from those whom he loved, and loved in the truth (think, for example, how he loved Jonathan), to be placed in virtual antagonism to them and to their ways; to be associated with many, who joined him rather because constrained by misery, than because attracted by truth; and to be, as Nabal said, like a runaway servant, or a robber of the desert, this was indeed, a trial to David. But he was learning to acquiesce in the appointments of God. The words which he used at this moment to the King of Moab, show how truly he was learning subjection: for when he asked permission of the king to place his aged parents within the territory of Moab, he meekly added, "till I know what God will do for me."

One of the chief and peculiar trials of David whilst thus compelled to relinquish Israel, was, the being separated from the ostensible worship of God. The place of such worship could, by God's appointment, be found only in Israel. *There* was the place of the united service and the wor-

ship of the tribes: and there, in association with them, David had been wont to worship. But now he was cut off even from this. Others could worship according to the appointed order, surrounded by multitudes in avowed communion of thought and feeling — all equally appearing the honoured and accepted worshippers of God. But David was banished from these things. He was a wanderer in the wilderness; in appearance, a forsaken outcast—not a worshipper. Yet, although neither priest, nor altar, were there — no worshipping multitudes—no outward celebrations—yet, where was the eye of the God of Israel really resting, in peaceful complacency? Where were the sounds which were really melody in his ear? Were they found in the worshipping throngs of Israel, or in the solitude of the wilderness of Judah, where David said, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." Such was the Psalm of David whilst separated from Israel, and from Israel's worship in the wilderness. David indeed, was no longer privileged to behold the power and glory of God, as he had in times past

beheld it: nevertheless, in his new circumstances of solitude and sorrow, it was given to him to prove a "loving-kindness that was better than life," and to recognise therein the earnest of mercies yet to come. "Because thou HAST BEEN my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings WILL I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes. But the KING shall rejoice in God: every one that sweareth by Him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped." Such was his confidence in God. He confided in Him for preservation indeed, and for deliverance; but not for deliverance merely—he anticipated being delivered as the KING who should finally behold his enemies fall, and be himself appointed to lead the worship of Israel — to guide their counsels, and direct their energies, according to that knowledge of God, which he was now learning in the wilderness.

Thus, then, he in whom the true hopes of Israel centred, had become silently separated by God, and brought into a wilderness just as Israel themselves had once been, when taken from Egypt and brought into the desert. It was a significant lesson, for all who had hearts to understand. It showed that God had begun to find the characteristics of Egypt in Israel itself, and that Jerusalem had entered on that course, whereby ultimately she will become,

in the estimate of the Spirit of God, like Sodom and Egypt "called spiritually Sodom and Egypt." (Rev. xi.) When nature and expediency, and worldliness, and sin, guide the professing people of God in the use of the light and truth whereunto they are separated—when those truths become debased and perverted, and misused knowledge adds potency to evil, what path is open to them that fear God, save that of separation? Was it otherwise, when a greater than David came and found Israel and Israel's rulers full of a spirit, of which Saul the king, and Doeg his Edomite servant, were but imperfect types? And did He not separate? Did He not call His little flock without the gate, bearing His reproach? And now, that professing Christianity has failed, and Christendom become the proud seat of the world's evil in its most advanced forms, can they who have the spirit of faith, acquiesce in, and follow the ways of Christendom? No more than David could rest in the house of Saul: or Jesus, in the courts of Caiaphas, or of Cæsar.

There are few things more important in the sight of God, than this *second* separation. Israel was a separated body; yet David was separated from Israel itself. It is in this *second* separation that the wilderness Psalms become appreciated. We see in them lines of experience, which we too, may in our measure verify. They teach us also to understand better the rejection and sorrows of Him, who embodied in Himself all that was true, all that was

of God in David, apart from David's imperfections, and without David's failures.

Happy are they who, at this present hour of the Church's history, know anything of separation unto this second wilderness. It has its sorrows, but it has also its joys. The sorrows will fade, but the joys will brighten till they meet the light of the eternal day.

II.

NABAL AND ABIGAIL.

When God has bestowed on any of His servants peculiar grace, it is often subjected to peculiar trial, that its excellency may be the more fully manifested. The chill blast of the north wind, as well as the more gentle influences of the south, when it blows upon the garden, causes the spices thereof (if such there be) to flow forth. Nor has there ever been any heart (One only excepted) that has not *needed* discipline. Hence not unfrequently, the trials of God's servants are prolonged as well as various.

But besides these ends which respect the servants of God themselves, God is pleased by means of their characters and their sufferings, to test others. Their characters may be appreciated, or they may be despised; their sufferings may be soothed by sympathy, or aggravated by reproach; the hand of kind compassion may be extended towards their necessities, or cruelty may delight in multiplying their miseries. Thus was it with Him, of whom it was said, that He was set "as a sign." * * * * * * "*in order that the thoughts of many hearts*

might be revealed." His presence tested the hearts of men. From some it drew forth confession, thanksgiving, and praise — thoughts according to God: from others it elicited thoughts of enmity and hatred—proofs of the darkness and corruption that dwelt within. So, in measure has it ever been with Christ's servants, and Christ's truth.

The history of David in the wilderness, affords a remarkable example of the diverse judgment formed by two different hearts in contemplating the same object—one seeing and acknowledging the presence and power of God, where the other saw nothing save that which it contemned and scorned. Near to David in the wilderness, dwelt Nabal, a man great in the abundance of his riches; one who in the midst of all the convulsions that were distracting Israel, had contrived to root himself in prosperity and earthly good—rich as David was poor, honourable as David was despised.

Nabal had heard of David. However absorbed in schemes of selfish acquisition, he could not shut out from himself the knowledge of a name that had once made all Israel rejoice, and was still causing all Philistia to tremble. He had heard of the fame and of the sorrows of David. It was therefore no stranger whose messengers, in the day of Nabal's festivity, presented themselves with words of peace at his gates, and asked for a blessing from his hands. "David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name: and

thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David."

An opportunity of owning and befriending David was thus suddenly presented to Nabal, an opportunity worthy of a descendant of Caleb—for Nabal was of Caleb's house. There were few more honoured names in Israel's history, than that of Caleb, the faithful companion of Joshua. When Israel, unsatisfied with the assurances of the Lord their God, determined on inspecting for themselves (see Deut. i. 22), the land which He had Himself described to them, and promised for a possession, their eyes, as might have been expected, were quickly arrested by the sight of new and unanticipated dangers—and as they beheld the dangers, they forgot God. The giant might of the Anakims, and the strength of cities walled up to heaven, became greater in their eyes than the invisible strength of the Lord their God. Terrified and disheartened by the sight which they had asked to see, they murmured and rebelled. Joshua and Caleb only out of

all who had beheld the land, remained faithful to God. And when at length the long-expected hour arrived for the land to be divided, as God had said, the faithfulness of Caleb was not forgotten. He received a princely inheritance among his brethren, even the land whereon his feet had trodden, a watered land with upper and with nether springs. But now the hour of Caleb had passed, and Nabal had come. Succession had brought Nabal, the fool, (for such is the meaning of his name) into the place of Caleb the man of faith. It was but an ensample of what succession had done throughout Israel as a whole; and yet, succession was *in that dispensation*, a principle appointed of God—appointed that it might be tried. And what was the result? Nabal was written on all the official arrangements of Israel!

And observe the character of the test applied to Nabal. An opportunity was afforded of owning that person, who, though an outcast in the wilderness, was really he in whom all the hopes of Israel centred—one whom Samuel had anointed—one in whom the blessing of the God of Israel had manifestly rested throughout all his afflictions. How surely would Nabal's forefather—Caleb—have recognised, in David, the chosen servant of the Lord! But Nabal discerned none of these things. Seeing, he saw not; hearing, he heard not. The evil of Saul, or the excellency of David, the spread of falsehood, or the growth of truth, the presence of God's favour, or the tokens of His displeasure, were all alike to

Nabal. David had been compelled to resign his place of honour in the courts of Saul. His flight from the fierce fury of Saul, admitted of being spoken of as the act of a servant who had run away from his master: and Nabal gladly availed himself of the plausible misrepresentation. "Who," said he, "is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master." His churlish soul, adding insult to injury, dismissed the messengers of David with contumely and scorn.

It is a hard thing to endure. David had endured, and was enduring much. He was suffering from the active enmity of Saul, and from the dull apathy of Israel. But both were great, and so to speak, dignified enemies. Saul was Israel's king; and Israel were God's people. It seemed comparatively honourable to be persecuted by *them*: but it was a far different thing to endure the reproach of one so despicable as Nabal. "Surely in vain," said David, "have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness." He forgot that all suffering, all reproach, that is *for God's sake*, is equally honourable, whether it come from a monarch, or from a churl. His proud spirit was roused, and he who had refused to lift up his hand against Saul, and had never unsheathed his sword against Israel: he who was called to fight, not for his *own sake* against his *own* enemies, but for the *Lord's sake* against the *Lord's* enemies, he—David, forgot his calling, and swore that Nabal should expiate his offence in blood.

But there was dwelling in Nabal's house one whose thoughts had no communion with his. Abigail was Nabal's wife. Bound to him by a tie which none but God could break,—obliged to own him as her lord, she had probably spent many a day of bitter anguish, surrounded by circumstances that her spirit loathed, and debarred from all in which it would have rejoiced. Such was the appointment of God. She had bowed to it; and her submission had not been in vain. Excluded from many a sphere of active service, which, under other circumstances she might have filled, meditation seems to have been her resource. She had considered and estimated aright, the condition of Saul, of Israel, and of David. The dark clouds of sorrow that had so long and so deeply surrounded David, had not prevented her from discerning that he was the man whom God was blessing, and would bless for ever. She saw, to use her own words, that "the souls of his enemies should finally be slung out, as out of the middle of a sling, but that his soul should be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord his God." "And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that He hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid."

Such were the words with which Abigail, taking the place of intercession, met David. There are few things more honoured of God than intercession. It is the opposite to that habit of soul that delights to discover evil, in order that it may gratify itself by rushing into the judgment seat, and awarding the vengeance that it deems to be due. Abigail interceded; and observe the consequences of her intercession. Nabal and his household were preserved from destruction, and David restrained from shedding innocent blood—for every male in the house of Nabal had been marked by David for destruction. She was able, too, to admonish David. Could David at that moment have pourtrayed as did Abigail, the dignity of his own high calling? Angered and excited, he had lost the sense of what he himself was, and of what his enemies were in the estimate of God: the remembrance of all this had faded on *his* soul, but in Abigail's it remained in vividness and power. Reminding him of his calling, pourtraying his future destiny, she asked him whether such an one as he should shed blood causeless; whether it became him to avenge *himself;* whether he wished to prepare for himself anguish and remorse to embitter the day of his coming joy. David heard her words, and instantly recognised the intervention of God. "Blessed," said he, "be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own

hand." Here was indeed honour and reward for Abigail : a sudden recompense for her loneliness and sorrows. How little had she anticipated whilst dwelling in the solitude of Carmel, imprisoned amidst the sordid interests of Nabal, that she was thus to be used as a messenger of God to sway the course of the destined head of Israel, and to save him from a deed of deadly sin. Suddenly she was called to this honour. In the morning she arose expecting to behold, as usual, the low festivities of one whose heart was as his name, but in a moment she found herself going forth like a prophet of God to warn, to encourage, and to direct, His chosen servant.

Abigail fulfilled her mission ; and then, with blessing resting on her head, she meekly retired to the place of her sorrows again. The day of danger had been spent by Nabal in revelling and drunkenness. Abigail on her return found him stupefied by wine, unconscious therefore of the peril that had come so near his household; unconscious of the mercy of his deliverance. The night passed, and the morning came. It rose as a morning of joy to his delivered house; but it was no morning of joy to him. He heard from the faithful lips of Abigail the tale of his deliverance; he heard of the instrumentality by which it had been wrought. Her words were as arrows to his soul — his heart withered, and he died. So must it finally be with every Nabal-like heart. It cannot greet the day of God. When the morning shall arise without clouds, and

others shall give thanks for their great deliverance and say Alleluiah, every such heart will quail and perish for ever.

The hand of God avenged His servant, and freed the energies of Abigail. She became the spouse of David—the partner of his dangers, and subsequently of his triumphs. Her path indeed was not without its sorrows. Even David himself, as we shall afterwards see, was the means of involving her in perils she had never known before; but in suffering with him, she was suffering with one by whom God was working His work of blessing in Israel, and this was sufficient compensation for this woman of faith.

They who are most engaged in the activities of ostensible service, are not always best able to appreciate their own position. Abigail, ostensibly unemployed for God, suffering too from causes that were private rather than connected with His truth and service, had nevertheless formed conclusions so true, so firmly established in her soul, that when the hour of emergency arrived, she was instantly able to act with an energy and decision that influenced in result the whole destinies of Israel. Let this be an encouragement to all, who fearing God and seeking to learn of Him, yet mourn alone in secret places.

Abigail, indeed, had not so subjected herself to Nabal as to make his will paramount to the will of God. Whenever the duty she owed to God clashed with the duty she owed to her husband, there can be no question as to her decision. She was a woman of faith; she obeyed God rather than man. A proof

of this was given in her resolve to meet and to propitiate David. If Nabal had been consulted, he no doubt would have forbidden her to proceed; but she saw what duty demanded—duty to her household, to her husband and to God; and therefore she hesitated not to go unbidden. Having fulfilled her duty she returned, and again submitted herself to Nabal; yet only so far as she could obey God in obeying him—a path difficult indeed, and full of trial. God saw the difficulty, and Himself opened a way of deliverance.

We must beware indeed of thinking that the same manifested interference as was then vouchsafed to Abigail must necessarily be granted now. The era of David was one in which God was avowedly subjecting evil, and causing His servants to triumph over it; whereas the present is a period when evil is *for a season* being allowed to prevail, and endurance rather than triumph is made the characteristic of God's people. "Brethren," said the Apostle, "we count them happy that ENDURE." Nevertheless, though the hour of deliverance may be delayed, and though truth may be denied its triumph now, the joy of victory will not be less welcome when at last it comes. The sufferings of David ended in a throne—those of Jeremiah in a dungeon—but were the latter less precious in the sight of God? Will they be esteemed less precious in that final day?

III.

DAVID IN ZIKLAG.

THERE are few periods in the life of David in which his patient endurance was displayed more conspicuously than in his last interview with Saul. Saul had once more fallen into his power; but David again refused to avail himself of the advantage. He would not deliver himself by means that God did not sanction, nor stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed. Recognition of the excellency of David, and confession of his own sin, was extorted, even from the lips of Saul. Then said Saul, "I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm * * behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." But David had learned not to confide in Saul, or in any *man*. "Surely men of high degree are vanity, and men of low degree are a lie." In his reply, he made no reference to the promises of Saul—he did not say, "As thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in *thine* eyes," but he said, "So let my life be much set by in the eyes of THE LORD, and let HIM deliver me out of all

tribulation." Then Saul said to David, "Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things and also shalt still prevail." Such were the last words of Saul to David. He never saw David again: he never had the opportunity of persecuting him again. The relation of Saul to David closed with these words. Patient faith had so prevailed as to extort a blessing, even from its adversary.

Yet the moment in which faith attains any triumph, is often one of peculiar danger. Self-confidence may be engendered by success, and pride may spring out of honour that humility has won; or else, if faithfulness, after having achieved its victory, still finds itself left in the midst of danger and sorrow, the hour of triumph may be succeeded by one of undue depression and sorrowful disappointment. And thus it was with David. He had obtained this great moral victory; but his circumstances were still unchanged. Saul yet continued to be king of Israel: himself remained a persecuted outcast. As the period, when he had before spared the life of Saul, had been followed by days of lengthened sorrow, so he probably anticipated an indefinite prolongation of similar sufferings, and his heart quailed at the prospect. "And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines."

And yet the hour of Saul's fall and of his own deliverance was close at hand. The Lord was about to interfere, and to extricate His faithful servant

from his long and sore afflictions. Almost the very last hour of his trial under Saul had come, yet at that last moment he failed: so hard is it for "patience to have her *perfect* work." David had just said, "*Let the Lord* deliver me out of all tribulation." It was a strong, and no doubt a sincere expression of confidence in God; but the feeling of the heart, as well as the expression of the lips, may often exceed the reality of our spiritual strength; and therefore, not unfrequently, when strong expressions have been used, they who have used them are tested by some peculiar trial; that so, if there be weakness, it might be detected, and no flesh glory in the presence of God.

This was not the first time that David had retired to Gath of the Philistines. He had once before sought Gath as a refuge; had found it no refuge, and fled from it in dishonour. On the previous occasion, however, of his quitting Israel, his heart was, notwithstanding his sorrow, buoyant. When the priest spoke to him of the sword of Goliah, the quick energy of his reply—"there is none like that; give it me"—indicated an unbroken elasticity of spirit, that appeared more than equal to the pressure. But it was otherwise now. Now his heart was dejected and depressed; and the dejection of nature, no less than its elation, is a foe to the patient endurance of faith. Accordingly, the faith of David again gave way; and he again fled for refuge to Achish of Gath.

The Scriptures do not inform us what it was that

had so far changed the feelings of Achish, as to dispose him to receive with courtesy and kindness the very person whom he had before driven ignominiously from his presence. No doubt the circumstances of David were greatly changed. On the former occasion he had come alone; now he was the captain of six hundred well-tried warriors. When he came before, the relation in which he stood to Saul and to Israel was but imperfectly known; now it was notorious that he was really separated from Israel, and that Saul really regarded him as an enemy. Time also might have weakened among the Philistines the sense of their dishonour in the fall of Goliah—nor was Goliah's sword seen any longer in David's hand. But whatever the reason, Achish, we are told, received him; and not only received him but gave him Ziklag to dwell in as his own city. Thus the scheme of David seemed thoroughly to prosper. He found in Ziklag a rest to which he had long been a stranger. Himself, his family, his people, rested safe from the approaches of their dreaded foe. Providence seemed to have granted him this asylum as a blessing; and none but they who had the eye of faith would have judged otherwise. All else would have congratulated David, and whispered peace.

But rest reached by self-will or disobedience is anything rather than peace to the heart that fears God, and loves His service. David could not forget that Israel, whom he had forsaken, were God's people; nor that the Philistines, whom he had

joined, were God's enemies. He could not but remember his own peculiar relation to God, and to his people—for Samuel had anointed him, and even Saul had blessed him as the destined king of Israel. His conscience, therefore, must have been ill at ease; and the stillness and rest of Ziklag would only cause him to be more sensible of its disquietude.

When the conscience of God's servants tells them that their position is wrong, one of their devices not unfrequently is, to give themselves, with fresh energy, to the attainment of some right end; as if rightly directed, or successful energy, could atone for committed evil, and satisfy the misgivings of a disquieted heart. Accordingly, David, still retaining the self-gained rest of Ziklag, resolved that it should not be the rest of inactivity, but that he would thence put forth fresh energies against the enemies of God, and of His people. The Amalekites were nigh. The Amalekites were they of whom the Lord had sworn that he would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. David therefore went up against them, and triumphed. Nothing could be more complete than his success—"he smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive; and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel." Ziklag was enriched with spoil, and that the spoil of the enemies of the Lord. What prosperity then could be greater—what apparently more immediately from God?

And yet God was not with him to sustain him

against the resulting difficulties and dangers that soon surrounded him; and of this, proof was speedily given. When Achish said to David on his return, "Whither have ye made a road to-day?" David was afraid. He was afraid to tell Achish the truth, and answered by a lie. David feared to tell the king of the Philistines that he had been destroying Israel's enemies and the Philistines' friends. He said, therefore, that he had gone up against Judah —"and Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever."

The consequences of the lie were soon apparent. The Philistines were gathering their armies together to fight with Israel: "and Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men." This was an unexpected blow to David; but he had earned it for himself. It was one of the results of his having entered a path which he had opened for himself, and in which he had deemed it needful to protect himself by a lie. Better that he had remained in inactivity in Ziklag, than that he should have so acted apart from God as to bring himself by his energy into the supposed necessity of delivering himself by a lie. That lie involved further consequences. It induced Achish to confide in him as being what he professed to be—the deadly enemy of Israel. If David had told the truth, Achish would never have dreamed of enrolling him amongst the hosts of the Philistines. It was his own contrivance

that had brought him there. He, who so well knew how to discriminate between the Philistines and the armies of the living God; and who, on the ground of that distinction, had so often sought and obtained the assistance of the God of Israel, now found himself leagued with the enemies of God for the destruction of God's people. He who had so distinctly refused to stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, was now enrolled with those very hosts who were about to shed the blood of Saul, and of Jonathan too, upon the mountains of Gilboa. Such were the terrible circumstances in which David suddenly found himself. He seems to have looked upon them as hopeless, nor do we read of his attempting any remedy.

But David had not ceased to be the subject of care to the Great Shepherd of Israel. He had wandered, and was to be brought back. The secret providence of God again interfered, and separated him from the camp of the Philistines. The other lords of the Philistines, more prudent than Achish, were wroth with him for the confidence he reposed in David, and insisted on his dismissal. "Make this fellow return," said they, "that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him * * * lest in battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men? Is not this David, of whom they sung one to another in dances, saying, 'Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" So David was again rejected. The song that had been

intended for his honour before men, now for the third time brought him dishonour; though, in the hand of God, it became the instrument of his preservation. Achish, however, retained his confidence in David, and in reply to David's remonstrance, answered and said, "I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God"—words that must have pierced David's soul, when he remembered how grievously he had deceived his benefactor.

There were few occasions in David's life where he had cause more thankfully to recognise the merciful interference of God than in this deliverance from the camp of the Philistines. If he had acted as a traitor, what more base, what more disgraceful than such requital of his benefactor? If on the other hand, he had fought against Israel, he would have been guilty of the blood of his people. We can easily suppose therefore, that he felt himself relieved of a heavy burden when he quitted the army of the Philistines, to return to his own peaceful Ziklag. He might easily have deceived himself into the belief that God, by His providence, was sanctioning his way. The gift of Ziklag at first—the quiet he had there enjoyed—his present extrication from the Philistines—might all be interpreted as evidences of providential care and sanction of God. We may easily suppose therefore, that it was with no little elasticity of spirit and self-congratulation, that David, as soon as the morning arose, obeyed the direction of Achish, and retraced his steps to Ziklag. It was the place where he had deposited all that was chiefly dear to him on

earth—his wives and his children were there—it was the rest which he had formed for himself; but apart from God.

David therefore, and his band of faithful followers gladly, no doubt, returned to Ziklag. They returned to it; but they found it not. "They came to the city, and behold it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives." A band of the same Amalekites, whose country they had so lately spoiled, had fallen upon Ziklag in their absence, and wrought this fell work of ruin. "Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep."

It was indeed no wonder that David's heart was stricken. He had never before known what it was to be smitten like this by the chastening hand of God. Of late he had seemed even more than ordinarily to be the subject of His care: but now the relation of God seemed suddenly changed into one of severity and wrath. During the years that David had watched his father's flock, during his residence in the courts of Saul, during the time of his sorrowful sojourn in the wilderness, during his late eventful history in Ziklag, he had never experienced anything but kindness and preservation from the hand of God. He had become so long accustomed to receive sure protection from God's faithful care, that he seems to have calculated on its uninterrupted continuance. He had lately said, "The Lord render unto every man his righteousness * * * and let

Him deliver me out of all tribulation." But now the Lord Himself seemed turned into an enemy, and to fight against him. Nor could the conscience of David have failed to discern the reason. It must have owned the justice of the blow. Thus, however, the bitterness of his agony would be aggravated, not lessened.

Moreover, on all past occasions he had ever found some to sympathise with, and to console him in his afflictions. In the house of Saul, he had had the affection of Jonathan, and the favour of many beside: even in the wilderness, six hundred out of Israel had joined him, and had faithfully struggled with him through many a day of difficulty and danger: but now, they too abandoned him. Enraged at the sudden calamity, (for they also were bereaved of everything)—stung to the quick by a sense of its bitter consequences—imputing all to David (for it was he who had guided them to Ziklag)—even they who shrunk not from the sorrows of the cave of Adullam, and who had braved all the dangers of the wilderness, forsook him now. They all turned fiercely upon him as the author of their woe, and spake of stoning him. Thus stricken of God—execrated by his friends; — bereaved of all that he loved, David drank of a cup which he had never tasted before. He had earned it for himself. It was the fruit of his self-chosen Ziklag.

It is well for the servants of God, that He who hath abounded towards them in all wisdom and prudence is pleased, when He first calls them into His

service, to endow them with a power eternal and unchangeable in its affinities, and therefore, independent of and above all the tendencies and affinities of nature. The energies and affinities of nature, so long as they operate, hinder and obstruct the Spirit of God; but when they fail, that Spirit remains—remains in the integrity of its strength, and is able to develop itself according to its own almighty fulness. It is *of* God and leads *to* God, and therefore the heart in whom it dwells surely reverts unto God at last; just as the needle, once touched with magnetic power, turns with steady constancy towards the unseen centre of attractive influence. Else, on what principle could the heart of David then—a heart that had wandered from God, and was at that moment quailing under His rebuke—how could such a heart, at such a moment, turn calmly and confidently to God in any power that nature could give? Nature shrinks from God always, but more especially when under His rebuke. It may turn to other refuges, but never to God. Saul, just at this very moment, found himself, too, environed with danger; and he turned to the witch of Endor. But of David it is said, "though greatly distressed, * * he encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

David instantly consulted God. We do not hear of his consulting God when he determined on settling in the land of the Philistines, nor when he went up against the Amalekites, nor when he deceived Achish by a lie: but now, in the extremity of his distress, he simply and confidingly consulted God.

"And David inquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And He answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all." See the goodness and perfectness of the grace of God. There was no delay in this answer—no reserve—no ambiguity; more even was told than David had asked. He was told not only that he might pursue, but that he should surely recover all. In a moment the black cloud of sorrow, that had hung so darkly over David's soul, was gone: agony gave place to joy: and he whom his companions had been dooming to death, stood suddenly before them as the honoured servant of the Lord his God, commissioned to pursue and to conquer. He did pursue, and all was as God had said. The enemy was overcome: everything that pertained to David and his company was recovered, and there was great spoil.

Abigail was among those who had been carried into captivity. We may imagine the acuteness of *her* sorrow, for her heart was sensitive, and able to estimate circumstances according to God. She had counted it an honour to leave the wealth and abundance of Nabal's house, in order to share the dangers of David, when dwelling as a dishonoured outcast in the wilderness: but she had little expected that he, to whom she had looked for sustaining her in the place of honour before God, would be the means of drawing her into circumstances that would result in her being delivered into the hands of the enemy. If

she had unduly confided in David—if she had at all allowed him to fill a place in her regard which should have been held only by God, we can easily imagine the character of the lesson which she learned, during the days and nights of her perilous captivity. David, too, when he thought of Abigail and others with her, must have felt a poignancy of self-reproach, to which he had been before a stranger. He had not been accustomed to plunge those dear to him into dishonour and woe, but rather to guide them into positions of honour, and to sustain them there. The joy that he had known in being the servant of others for good, only made him feel the more acutely the anguish of being an instrument against them for evil. What more disastrous than when the energy that should guide aright is changed into an energy that leads astray? And yet, how many an instance of this is found in the present condition of the Church of God.

Nevertheless, in the midst of their most disastrous failures, the servants of God may still seek to form a right estimate of their condition, and to judge of it according to God. *That* is a privilege which no calamity can alienate—no catastrophe destroy. An ability to enter, in measure, into the thoughts of God, and to appreciate rightly the circumstances around him, was a grace which seems peculiarly to have characterised David; and was doubtless the reason of his being pronounced to be, notwithstanding his many failures, "the man after God's own heart." Whether in prosperity, or in disaster, or

whilst being rescued from disaster, we constantly find in David certain traits of character which markedly contrast with the expressions and ways of those, who, though sharing the same circumstances had no participation in his feelings, or communion with his thoughts. When Joab exulted, David sorrowed. When others heard the curses of the foe, and wished to quench them in blood, David recognised the hand of God, restrained the arm of vengeance, and meekly bowed to the infliction. Again, when others abandoned themselves to rage or to despair, David encouraged himself in God.

The history we are now considering affords another example of the manner in which the feelings of David contrasted with those of others around him. Nothing but the most unmerited grace could have granted so great deliverance; and David felt it so. He saw that it was peculiarly an hour when every selfish claim should be silenced. He knew that instead of each considering how much his own individual hand had wrought—how much therefore might be appropriated to self, and denied to others—it was rather a time for liberality to put forth all its expansiveness, and to stretch to the very utmost the circle of its beneficence. Such were the thoughts of David. Freely he had received; freely he sought to give. But there were, says the Scripture, among those who went with David, "wicked men, men of Belial," who had other thoughts than these. Two hundred of David's little band, whilst pursuing the Amalekites, had fainted

by the way. Their hearts were true; they would have followed if they could, but they had no more strength, and therefore David pitied and left them. Should these then share the spoil? The men of Belial answered, No! "Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil." But what did David say? "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord has given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so, from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day." Blessed ordinance indeed; which embodied the mind of one greater than David, for which His redeemed will praise Him for ever and ever.

But how fearfully different may be the effect produced on different persons by the same circumstances. David came out of this night of sorrow with a heart so disciplined, so instructed according to God, that its judgment could be adopted by God, and established as an enduring ordinance for his people: whereas others, though brought through the same dangers, and made recipients of like mercies, evinced a habit of soul, which marked them in God's sight as "wicked men, and men of Belial." What indeed more abhorrent to God, than that which would narrow the expansiveness of grace. What more abominable in His sight than a selfishness that seeks to extract out of His free

mercies some excuse for aggrandising itself by depriving others of blessings.

David not only distributed of the spoil to all who had followed him in the wilderness, and shared his dangers there—he also remembered that there were some, who, though they had refused to quit their position in Israel, and had shrunk (as well they might) from the cave of Adullam, did nevertheless love and favour him. Yet though they had drawn back from following him, and had declined to partake of his cup of sorrow, David, in the hour of his triumph, refused not to them participation in his joy. "And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the Lord." Such is the liberality of a heart that has sought and found its portion in GRACE. Nor will it be otherwise in that coming hour, when TRUTH (having passed through its last conflict), the result of its struggles shall be made manifest in the day of final victory. The word of favour—the deed of kindliness to those who may have been dwelling, as it were, in caves of Adullam, for the Lord's sake, will not be forgotten then, even in the case of those who have shrunk from full identification with the place of suffering and reproach. The efficaciousness of Truth is great, and cannot be destroyed. Its potency will surely reach, in the power of everlasting blessing, even that which stands on the uttermost circle of its influence.

Shall the knowledge of this tempt us to retire into

greater distance, or to draw nearer to the centre of blessing? The narrative of Ziklag is the record of superabounding grace. May we reverently use it, not to nurture our evil—not to encourage ourselves in forming Ziklags, or in shunning caves of Adullam, but as an incentive to abide in Him: or if we have wandered, to return to Him who upbraideth not for the past — who calleth to honour as well as to blessing.

IV.

DAVID RESTORING THE ARK.

THE first period in the public life of David, spent for the most part in the dignity of Saul's court, ended, as we have seen, in failure. His faith failed, and he was found a dishonoured exile in the land of the Philistines. Thence, disciplined and humbled, he entered on the second period of his history—a period not spent in kings' courts, but in the wilderness. Yet this period also, though fruitful in many an instance of triumphant faith, ended likewise in sorrowful failure. David was a second time found in the land of the Philistines. His sojourn in the wilderness, just as his residence in the courts of Saul before, ended *there*. Thence, with a heart instructed as it never had been instructed before, he was summoned to enter upon the third period of his eventful history. If he had been disposed to glory in any thing that his energy had effected, or his patience endured, how must every such thought have been silenced, when he remembered the lessons twice taught in Gath of the Philistines!

David had scarcely had time to meditate on the dealing of that hand, which had first, in well-merited chastisement, stripped him of every thing, and then restored to his repentant cry more than it had taken

away, when tidings suddenly reached him of the fall of Saul, and the disastrous defeat of Israel. Suddenly, he found himself delivered from the greatest of all his enemies—him of whom he had lately said, so mistrustingly: "I shall yet one day perish by his hand." That danger was now gone for ever; the long-expected deliverance was come; yet with accompaniments he had little anticipated. The cup had in it a bitterness which he had not expected. The head of Israel had dishonourably fallen—Jonathan was slain—Israel were in jeopardy. Instead of celebrating his own deliverance, David was constrained to say, "The beauty of Israel is slain * * * tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon: lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.* * * O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished. And David took hold on his clothes, and rent them: and likewise all the men that were with him: they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword."

Such were the circumstances, such the feelings, with which David, after definitely consulting God, returned into the land of Israel. It might have been expected that all Israel would have been ready

to welcome him. Had it not long ago been declared by the lips of Samuel, that God had forsaken the house of Saul? Had not this been acknowledged by Saul himself? Had not God by the destruction on Gilboa, finally set His seal to the truth of His denunciations? And was it not evident, that the strength and blessing that had departed from Saul, had accompanied the dishonoured sojourn of David in the wilderness? The might of Israel was there. There were they who were able to break through the host of the Philistines, and to draw from the well of Bethlehem, when Bethlehem and its waters were in the grasp of the enemy. There too, was the Psalmody of Israel. And yet, despite of every indication that God had given — careless alike of the tokens of His favour towards David, and of His displeasure towards themselves—the tribes of Israel continued to reject the chosen servant of God; and Judah only welcomed him. The son of Saul, though feeble and unknown, was preferred to David; and David left the wilderness, only to be engaged in a long and destructive struggle with those who should have welcomed him as the gift of God for their blessing. So slowly does the hand of God effectuate its purposes—so resolute are men in refusing to recognise any thing save that which gratifies the tendencies of their nature, or approves itself to the calculations of their self-interest. For seven years and six months, Abner and all the tribes of Israel fiercely assailed David: and yet afterwards, they were not ashamed to confess, that they knew that

David was he whom God had destined to be the deliverer of Israel. They knew this, and yet for seven years they sought to destroy him; and no doubt, all the while, spoke of themselves, and were spoken of by others, as conscientious men fulfilling an apprehended duty in adhering to the house of Saul. So easy is it to speak well of evil, and to encourage iniquity by smooth words of falsehood.

At last, however, God accomplished the long cherished desire of His servant's heart—the desire that He had Himself implanted—and David became the head and governor of Israel. The capture of the citadel of Zion, which till then had never been wrested from the foe, made him the virtual founder of Jerusalem; and undisputed supremacy began for the first time to attach to the people of God.

But of what value is strength, unless thoroughly subjected to God, and made the servant of His order, and of His truth? David well knew that Israel could only regulate others for blessing, in proportion as they themselves were regulated by God. To be legislated for by God, was the distinctive privilege of Israel. It was theirs to say of Him, "*my King* as well as my God." What then was the condition in which David found the order of Israel? Was Israel really subject to the arrangements of God?

The condition of Israel's order was mainly determined by their relation to the Tabernacle and its vessels, especially their relations to the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was the especial emblem of

God's own presence. Containing within itself the Tables written by the finger of God—covered by the mercy-seat, and overshadowed by the cherubim, it was at once the symbol of the holiness, and of the mercy, and of the almighty power of God, combined on behalf of His people. Accordingly, the place of His visible presence was the expiation-seat* between the cherubim of glory. There He was to be known; there worshipped; thence He was wont to watch over and direct Israel.

When Israel were in their journeys in the wilderness, the Ark preceded them. It penetrated the desert before them, "to seek out a resting place for them." When it advanced, they advanced; when it rested, they rested. "When the Ark set forward, Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." Again, when Canaan was to be entered, it was the Ark that went down into the depths of Jordan, and divided its waters for the steps of Israel. "The priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan." And once more, when Jericho was to be destroyed, the Ark of the Covenant compassed the city seven days,

* An expression to be preferred to mercy-seat. Mercy is one thing; mercy based on accepted expiation is another.

until the walls fell before it. So entirely was the exercise of the guiding and protective power of God associated with the Ark of His Covenant.

When the Ark rested, its proper place was the Tabernacle. There in their respective courts stood the altars: *there* were set the various vessels of ministration in their right relation to each other, and to the expiation-seat—all being necessary to the right order of Israel's worship, and of Israel's instruction. It is true indeed, that the presence of the Ark any where in Israel, was an evidence of God being near them, but God could not be worshipped in the appointed manner, nor could the order of His Truth be maintained, or His mercies be made manifest in giving rest and peace unto His people, unless the Ark was in the sanctuary with the expiation-seat placed over it as its covering. Then, the appointed services of the Levites and the Priests could be performed after the manner: but could they worship when there was no mercy-seat sprinkled with expiatory blood? The mere fact of the Ark being in the midst of Israel, was a proof that God had not forsaken His people; but it was no proof that His order and His ways were being recognised and obeyed. The Ark had been in the midst of Israel during the whole of Saul's evil reign, and abundant evidence was afforded that God had not forsaken Israel. David's own preservation was one abiding proof. Yet, notwithstanding all individual instances of Divine blessing found throughout Israel, what was become of the order of Israel's worship,

and of Israel's instruction as a whole? The fallen Tabernacle—the scattered vessels of ministration—the isolation of the Ark in an unknown dwelling—its separation from the expiation-seat—were sufficient indications that Truth and the order thereof, had indeed fallen. Can we trace in these things no typical likeness to the days in which we live? Are we living at an hour when the truths of God are maintained in their completeness, and in their right connections; or are they held partially, confusedly, detachedly, and out of their right relations to each other—many despised—many lost? And yet, who cares for these things? Men say, Is not God yet amongst us? Are not souls still saved by His grace? Why then should we concern ourselves about His order, or the more minute knowledge of His truth?

Throughout the reign of Saul — that period during which nature, not faith, directed the energies of Israel — the Ark was not only kept in separation from all the other vessels of the Tabernacle, but even in its isolation, it was neglected and dishonoured. It still remained the especial witness of God's presence, and of God's glory, where He might be consulted, and, in a measure at least, honoured. But it was not sought unto. Israel inquired not at it during the days of Saul. (1 Chr. xiii. 3.)

It was the sense of this that chiefly acted on the soul of David. He does not appear to have considered so much the absence of right relations between the Ark and the other vessels of the Taber-

nacle, as to have been struck by the more palpable and astounding fact of the want of *all* right relation between the Ark and Israel. Many years had passed since the wickedness of Israel, and Israel's priests had caused the Ark to be carried captive into the land of the Philistines. God indeed, would not permit it to remain there. By the special interference of His own providential power, He soon brought it back into the coasts of Israel again. But there, on the outskirts of Israel it remained, abandoned, and almost forgotten; though still refusing, in its own long-suffering mercy, to forsake the people by whom it was despised.

To bring back therefore the Ark from the place of its dishonour; to bring it again into the bosom of Israel; to make it once more that which Israel should seek unto and enquire at: and above all, to establish it in the citadel of Zion, the place of sovereign supremacy and strength; these were the immediate objects of David's desires. Herein he was fulfilling his office of king, in giving supremacy to God and to His truth.

But the servants of God have not unfrequently to learn, that the pursuit of a right end, does not necessarily imply the employment of right means. Indeed, after a long season of departure from the ways of God, if a sense of the value of that which sin has forfeited bursts suddenly on the soul, it is likely that the human heart would rush with inconsiderate haste to recover the privileges it has lost; not remembering that if we are required to regard

the appointments of God in respect of the end to be pursued, we have to regard them no less in respect of the means to be employed in the attainment of that end. This David proved. It seemed easy to him, and to the elders of Israel to move the Ark of God to its new habitation. The desire was holy; the object right; and they fully reckoned on the instant and unhindered blessing of God. A cart was prepared; oxen were yoked to it; the Ark of God was placed thereon; and one whom they appointed amongst themselves drave the oxen. Was it because oxen, secretly guided by the providence of God, had once brought back the Ark in safety from the land of the Philistines, that therefore they expected oxen, prepared and guided by the unbidden hand of man, to accomplish a similar end? The ordinance of God was express, that none but Priests and Levites should handle the vessels of the sanctuary: and although God, when the sin of Israel had brought the Ark into the land of the Philistines, where there were no Levites, no Priests, was at liberty to supersede His own ordinances, yet David was not God. It was not for David to forget (especially when seeking to restore the order of Israel) that God had commanded that His Ark should not be moved, save after an appointed manner. But it *was* forgotten. The ordinance of God was carelessly transgressed, and what was the result? The oxen stumbled; the Ark was endangered; Uzzah touched it, and was destroyed; David was angry; and the Ark proceeded no further: until at last, repenting

of his error, and of his anger, David assembled the house of Aaron and the Levites, in God's appointed way, and therefore under God's sanction, and with God's blessing, bore the Ark to its destined place in Zion.

David indeed might well humble himself because of his error: for what error could be greater than recklessly to transgress the solemn ordinance of God, who had said that none but Priests and Levites should touch the things of His sanctuary? Yet, has Christianity afforded no instances of similar transgression?

None, I trust, who read these pages, will imagine that I mean that there are now in the Church of God, any who stand to it in the same relation as that in which the priestly family stood to Israel. Whom did that priestly body typify? They typified the *whole* Church of God; for it is written of *all* believers, that they are Priests (Rev. i.)—"a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ." The outward ceremonies by which those typical Priests were separated, when they were sprinkled with blood, and anointed with oil, were but shadows of that better blood, and more excellent oil—even the unction from above, by which the true Priests of God are consecrated unto Him for ever. Mistake on this subject is fatal; for it puts the shadow for the substance. It confounds that which was given for typical purposes in the power of a fleshly commandment, with that which is esta-

blished anti-typically in the power of an endless life.

David infringed the typical order of God, and was punished: but how much sorer punishment do *we* deserve if we subvert the anti-typical reality—if wé raise the unsanctified and the unbelieving, those who fear not God and know not Christ, into functions which belong only to those who have truly the grace of His Spirit. Yet, can we say that Christianity has not been guilty of this sin? The Protestant Reformation was a time of peculiar intervention from the hand of God in mercy. Never since the Apostles died, has there been a period when the Spirit of God worked so effectually in unmasking error and disinterring Truth. But when light is sent from God, however clear it may be, or however precious, it is sure to encounter the obstructions of our evil: and unless these obstructions are, by sovereign grace, swept away, disastrous consequences will follow. Our evil, even if it succeed not in destroying the good, will nevertheless pervert it, and mar the work of God. The origin of the Reformation was markedly from God: but its developments were permitted to fall into the hands of men. Expediency assumed the helm, and compromise upon compromise followed. Principles were valued, because of their practicability, not because of their truth. Unconverted men were placed where none but Christ's true servants had a title to stand. The world again assumed the garments of the Church; and the enemies of the Truth, seeing how

many parts in the walls of Protestantism were built with untempered mortar, congratulated themselves as to the future, and waited for that time of assault which has since come.

They who show by their words and by their ways, that they do not truly receive the message that God has sent respecting His Son, and who shrink from the due confession of His name, cannot either worship or serve God acceptably. They who believe, and with their mouth confess—such only shall be saved; such only are Priests of God. Any arrangement for the order of God's Church that is not based upon this primary and axiomatic truth must be plain disobedience to Him. But even where this has been remembered, it has not unfrequently been forgotten, that although all believers are both Priests and Levites (all having the title to worship God in equal nearness and within the same holy Courts) yet nevertheless, all Priests and Levites had not the same office. Their employments were diverse; their duties various. They formed one body; but to each was assigned his own peculiar function. It is not otherwise in the Church of God. All are not pastors, or evangelists, or teachers, or rulers. Each member in the body of Christ has his own proper duties; his own gifts. In proportion as these are discerned, and recognised, there is order: but if under pretence of rejecting the self-devised appointments of men, the true ministerial order of God is neglected or despised, the same evil confusion and strife are introduced into the Church,

with which revolutionary wickedness is seeking to deluge the world.

But to return to David. There was no visible glory; no manifestation of the Divine presence, whilst David was restoring to Israel the long-banished Ark of the Covenant of their God. It was not as when in the days of Moses the cloud rested on the Tabernacle; or as when fire descended from Heaven, and consumed the sacrifices of the altar. It was the restoration of Israel to the place of forfeited privilege—the return of the Ark from the place of neglect and dishonour. Gladness, indeed, *but humiliation also*, became such a day; and David felt it so. He laid aside every emblem of warlike might, although his conflicts had been the instrumental means of this day of triumph: he laid aside his crown, and all tokens of his royal estate, although, as King of Israel, he was effecting these things for God. He laid aside all emblems of greatness, and clothed in a linen ephod, danced, with uncovered head, before the Ark. The very fact that his agency had been so markedly employed, and that the hand of God (as is usual in seasons of His people's weakness) had concealed itself, and wrought secretly through him, made it the more needful, when the day of blessing came, that David should seem as nothing, and that God alone should be exalted. If it had been a day in which God was visibly manifesting His own glory, there would have been no danger of David's being regarded unduly, even if all the splendour of Israel's glory had been

gathered around his person—for what is man in the presence of the glory of God? But it was otherwise when that glory was hidden—hidden because of Israel's sin; and when the solitary Ark, long exiled from the Tabernacle of God, was the lowly emblem of God's presence in the midst of His repentant people. The eye of faith could discern the blessedness of that hour; but the heart of the daughter of Saul, true to her lineage, saw no excellency in it. She beheld the joy of David, but, Nabal-like, she understood it not. She despised and upbraided him, and found in the day of Israel's blessing, a day of sorrow and lasting chastisement to herself. "Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death."

We have authority from Scripture for saying, that the things which happened to Israel, happened unto them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition. (1 Cor. x.) They who read the Old Testament Scriptures, remembering this, will be able to trace many a feature in the general aspect of Christianity that too closely resembles the condition of Israel at the time of which we have been speaking. How often, for example, do Christians seek to deaden their apprehension of the disorder and dereliction of truth that prevails around them, by the reflection that God has not forsaken, and never will forsake his own people; just as Israel might have said, in the days of Saul, "Is not the Ark yet amongst us?" It is indeed, most true, that God will not forsake his people; but is

preservation from final ruin, and deliverance from the extreme effects of disobedience, the only thing that is to be desired by the Church of God? Have they no distinctive testimony to maintain — no banner to display, because of God's truth? Is there no directive efficacy in His principles — nothing that forms the character, and determines the path of those who are subject to their power? If His principles be amongst us, and we regard them not, what can we expect, but that it should be said of us, as it was said of Israel, "that truth has fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter."

Indeed, from the moment the Apostles died, the features of the days of Saul have been abundantly marked on the history of Christianity. From that time forward, the directive energy that has since given to Christianity its character in the earth, ceased to be of God. "Until the time of Trajan," says Hegesippus,* "the Church remained as a virgin pure and uncorrupt; but when the sacred band of the Apostles died, and when that generation which had been permitted to hear with their own ears the words of inspired wisdom had passed away, then the conspiracy of godless error commenced its course, through the deceiving agency of other teachers, who, seeing that none of the Apostles were left, began from that time forth with open face to set up in rivalry to the truth the preaching of knowledge falsely so called." The principles of the days of Constantine, favoured even by real Chris-

* Hegesippus died about A.D. 180.

tians, and those of that later era when ecclesiastical Rome consolidated her corruptions, evidence the effects of that corruption, the rise of which Hegesippus saw. And if ever any true energy of faith has appeared, refusing to bow to the dominant power of evil, the cave of Adullam has been its virtual dwelling-place. Elsewhere it has found only that which is intolerant and repellent of truth.

There may indeed have been periods in the history of Christianity, such for example as the Protestant Reformation, when the revived energy of God's people seeking to re-establish the supremacy of truth, may have reminded us of the days of David, when he sought to bring back the Ark, and to establish it in Zion. No one, who understands and values the truth of the Gospel, can doubt that the Reformation was from God. But the finest gold may become dim: the stream of purest origin may be fouled in its course. Kings and unregenerate nations, and pastors ordained humanly, but not by God, were not, as I have already said, fit instruments whereby to rescue the truth of God from the grasp of the enemy, and to restore it to its citadel of strength. It is no marvel therefore, that God should have refused to commit His truth to such care as this. The oxen have, as it were, again stumbled; and whilst many a daring hand has been eagerly stretched out to uphold the tottering Ark, faith sees that the blessing of God is not there, and turns from the busy but unprospered throng.

Levites and Priests outwardly, there are none;

but Levites and Priests spiritually there are, for there is still the power of accepted service—still the power of accepted worship. Wherever the name and the work of the Lord Jesus is confessed according to the Scriptures of God, *there* does His Holy Spirit dwell: there, and there only, is found the separation of the Levite, and the anointing of the Priest; there only are they who have title to handle the vessels of the sanctuary. But where are they? They are scattered — and where among men is he who can assemble them? Where is that kingly spirit of faith that could lead them if assembled? Where is he, who like David, would dance before the Ark, and forget his own exaltation? Indeed, has not the spirit of service and the spirit of worship waxed feeble? Do not the Levites and Priests themselves slumber?

There may indeed have been individuals, who, acting on limited and comparatively private spheres, have mourned over the fall of truth, and have sought, as far as in them lay, its restitution to supremacy and honour. But a pebble cast into the tempest-tossed ocean produces no appreciable effect on its raging floods. Without a sound being heard, or a ripple being seen, it sinks unnoticed in the whirl of waters. Not indeed that any labour is in vain in the Lord. He who putteth the tears of His saints into His bottle, notes in the book of His remembrance their most trivial service, and in the day which shall disclose, not results of service merely, but counsels of the heart, the feeblest effort

of faith shall not lose its reward. "Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for thou renderest to every man according to his work." But whatever acts of hidden individual faithfulness there may have been, known only to God, *we* can speak only of such things as have been ostensible; and where, since the corruptions of Christianity commenced, can we point out any general movement, even among God's own people, that has not been manifestly defective, not only in the selection of the instrumental means of action, but also in a right apprehension of the truth itself? Not unfrequently, union for practical purposes has been attempted, apart from the truth of God as revealed by His Apostles and Prophets; which is, as if Israel had sought confederation apart from the Ark and the Tabernacle. What wonder, therefore, if there has been failure in result? There can be no *practical* union of counsel or of effort, apart from the regulating power of God's revealed truth. By it, and for it, His Spirit acts. Activity apart from it must be the activity of the mind and will of man.

When, therefore, we read of the triumph and exceeding joy with which David, and all Israel with him, brought up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord to Zion, "with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps," if we ask ourselves what these things indicate, we are obliged to look on to a yet future hour, when a greater than David — One whom David feebly

typified, will, as one of the results of His own conflicts, give rest, and establishment, and supremacy, to the long scorned and persecuted Truth. Else, what could be the meaning of the words, with which David, by the inspiration of God, celebrated the establishment of the Ark in Zion? "Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The Lord reigneth. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein. Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because He cometh to judge the earth. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever. And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the Gentiles, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise." The condition of Israel, and the condition of the earth at present, stand in sorrowful contrast with these words of blessing. Vain words indeed, unless referable to that coming hour, when Christ shall give to Truth its everlasting supremacy, and when it shall be said in Heaven and in earth, "The sovereignty of the world hath become the sovereignty of our Lord and of His Christ." Till then, truth will not triumph—till then, the servants of God must be content to know the affliction and endurance of the kingdom of Jesus. Nevertheless, the time is drawing nigh, when that typical hour of David's joy is to be accomplished in that final day of triumph, when the Psalms of Israel on earth shall unite with

the halleluiahs of the redeemed above in saying, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth." For that hour we wait, as those who have been alike made Levites — Priests — Kings; able therefore to serve, to worship, and to contend for Him, during the time of His people's weakness, and of His truth's dishonour, yet expecting no triumph until that day.*

* Lest my frequent reference to Levitical ceremonies in this paper should be at all misunderstood, I will take this opportunity of saying, that I consider that few things have occurred in the history of Christianity more fearful in their character than the attempts that have been lately made to introduce typical ceremonies, under the pretence of encouraging "æsthetic religion," *i. e.* a religion addressed to the senses—valuable, says the Bishop of London, in itself, but to be avoided at present, lest it should offend weak brethren!! Latitudinarianism too, though on different grounds, favours it, as may be seen in a sermon lately preached by Professor Powell, before the University of Oxford. [This was written in 1853.]

Ceremonies indeed, *when divinely appointed*, are, like every other ordinance of God, to be received with reverence. But what presumption can be greater than to invent typical ceremonies for ourselves! Such ceremonies are too momentously important in their effects for the appointment of them to be intrusted to any one excepting God.

Accordingly, these invented ceremonies, so far from embodying the truths of our holy faith, will be found in direct opposition thereunto. Take two prominent instances. Barriers —in some cases, gates of brass, have been set up in order to exclude all but the so-called Priests (ἱερεῖς) from the pretended Holy of Holies. What is this but a contemptuous annihilation of the Epistle to the Hebrews? Are we not there taught that all Believers are, as accepted and perfected worshippers, admitted into the true sanctuary—not indeed, earthly places made with hands, but Heaven itself? And is

Yet though we expect no triumph *now*, we nevertheless cease not to labour. "Blessed are they that sow beside all waters." If we take good heed to the character of the seed sown, we may leave in God's hands the results of the sowing.

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not the removal of every barrier made one of the primary points in the Apostle's instruction?

Again, the Table of the Lord is turned into an Altar. Now it is true that the Table of the Lord does stand in a certain relation to an Altar: so that if there had been no Altar, there could have been no Table: but that very relation shows that the Table is not an Altar. The relation is thus illustrated by St. Paul himself. When the Jewish peace-sacrifice was presented to God, part of it was burned on His Altar; but part was allowed to be taken by the worshipper himself. A Table was spread, apart from the Altar, and that Table was furnished by those parts of the sacrifice which had so been taken away. God, therefore, supplied the Table as from His own Altar; but that Table was not an Altar; it was positively contrasted with it. It could not indeed have existed, unless the claim of the Altar had been first satisfied; but so far from being the same thing as the Altar, what could be more contrasted?—for the direction of the Altar was *towards God*, from earth to Heaven; whereas, the direction of the Table was *from* God *towards* the worshipper—from Heaven towards those who were in the earth. Its object was to feed and strengthen the worshipper, not to satisfy God. The relation of the Lord's Table to the Cross is analogous. The Cross is the Altar: there the Sacrifice was once and for ever offered unto God. Thence, He spreads a Table, in connection with that Altar, and supplies it with continued memorials of that one sacrifice. But this, as well as every other truth with which it tampers, æsthetic religion subverts; and by re-instituting an Altar, declares that the Sacrifice of Christ is not finished, and nullifies the one atonement for the remission of sins.

V.

ABSALOM.

THE reign of David (and in this it contrasts with that of Solomon) was a continued conflict with enemies. Supremacy maintained against restless adversaries is a far different thing from the peaceful supremacy of undisputed power. The former was the allotment of David: *he* had to struggle with enemies who were still lifting up the head; but to Solomon, from the beginning, was granted rest. He rested in his royal house, and peacefully led the worship of Israel in the Temple of God. Thus Christ has first to conquer enemies, before He reigns, with all things brought under His feet.

To act therefore, as if the day of Solomon had come, before the day of David had ended, must have been disobedience to the appointments of God. Yet this David did, when, "*at the time when kings go forth to battle,*" he tarried still at Jerusalem. There resting in his palace, whilst the armies of Israel were in the field, he arose at evening-tide from his couch, to walk on the roof of his kingly house — a strange occupation for one who was called to be in the battle-field as Captain of the host of the Lord. Due and proper rest, indeed, is not denied to the servants of the Lord; there is a time to rest, and a

time to cease from resting: and this David knew. The sin of David was, not in that he rested, but that he rested when kings were going forth to battle. The consequence was that temptation came, and he fell into the greatest of his transgressions.

The sins of God's servants would not have been recorded, save for the instruction of others; and the scope of the lesson is often wider than we suppose. What has marked the history of Judaism and of Christianity too, save perpetual attempts to gain to themselves allegiance and affections that are elsewhere due? Nor have they ever hesitated to stretch forth the hand of destruction against Christ, or His truth, or His people, when they have deemed it expedient, either for the prosecution of their schemes of aggrandisement, or for the concealment of their deeds of abomination. Christianity early desired to reign: it early shunned the trial of conflict, and sought for itself unhallowed rest. It gained that rest; and has there sought to attract to itself the affections, and to secure the obedience of the Bride of Christ; and has indeed fearfully succeeded. Many a time has the energy of Christianity been put forth to draw the affections of the Church astray. Many a time has it exerted its power to crush Christ, as seen in His people and in His truth, lest the presence of light should expose and condemn its iniquity. It was for this that David stretched out his hand against Uriah. Uriah means "the light of God." The energies of God's own people, directed, as they often have been, by Satan, have

frequently been employed in quenching the light of God.

Great as was David's sin, he repented, and was forgiven. The depth of his anguish, and the reality of his repentance may be seen in the 51st Psalm. "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness: that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." His cry was heard, and he was enabled experimentally to declare the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." The mercy shown to David, stands as a memorial, for which myriads have had, and will have, to bless God for ever and ever. "For this" [that is, because of the mercy shown to me] "shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: * * * Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble: thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

Nevertheless, although his sin was forgiven, so that he should not die, and although sustainment and consolation were never withdrawn from him in his sorrows, yet the honour of God's name required that such transgression as David's should be

marked by no ordinary tokens of His displeasure: and this was the more needful, in a dispensation which derived its ostensible character from the strict righteousness of the Law of Sinai, rather than from the truth and grace of Zion. Accordingly, chastisement was instantly sent; nor did sorrow ever after leave the house of David. "Behold, said the Lord, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house * * * the sword shall never depart from thine house."

Old age had fallen upon David before the heaviest of these inflictions came, in the rebellion of Absalom his son. Absalom was the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur. David apparently became first connected with Geshur during his abode at Ziklag. Geshur was one of the places which he assailed when he attacked the Amalekites. "And David and his men went up and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt." Now Israel was forbidden to marry to themselves wives from these nations. "Thou shalt not make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son." Here then, apparently, was one of the results of his sojourn in Ziklag. Except for that sojourn, David probably would never have known Maacah the Geshurite. However, he took her to be his wife.

To Maacah were born Tamar and Absalom. Both

were fair; both attractive. "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." David probably was proud of the attractiveness which adorned his house, and was willing to forget the source from which it sprang. The attractiveness wrought its effects; and as might be expected from the attractiveness of nature, the resulting consequences were sin and sorrow. The beauty of Tamar was the cause of sin and destruction to Amnon, who fell beneath the revengeful hand of Absalom his brother; and the attractiveness of Absalom wrought on the hearts of the men of Israel, till they were drawn away from David and his throne. Such were the results of an attractiveness, derived from sources foreign and forbidden to God's people. Has Christianity profited by the lesson, or has it also formed alliances with the stranger?

Absalom, afraid of David's displeasure, fled to Geshur; the place of his Gentile origin, and there abode three years. There he might fitly have remained; but the weak heart of David, wrought on probably by the self-same attractiveness, yearned after Absalom. Joab and others observed this, and contrived his restitution. He *was* restored with a heart unhumbled and unrepentant, to become yet more distinctly, a scourge to his father's house.

Nothing is more blessed, nothing more according to God, than love and grace exercised towards an humbled and repentant heart. "If thy brother

trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." But if he refuse to repent; if he continue in frowardness and evil, there is no place for the *manifestation* of forgiveness —no room for the *development* of kindness and love. To attempt to exercise it under such circumstances is weakness and sin.

When David was persuaded to restore Absalom there were no tokens of repentance. We read of David's soul longing to go forth unto Absalom, but not of Absalom's soul longing to go forth unto David. When he was at last introduced to the King, we hear of his doing obeisance, and receiving the kiss of peace; but not one word of confession was uttered by his lips. God had not commanded his restoration. It was contrived by Joab, that subtle man of expediency, and by Joab's instrument—the wise woman of Tekoah. Thence came the wisdom, which, acting skilfully on the nature of David, persuaded him to restore his proud and traitorous son; one who had spent the three years of his sojourn in his Gentile home in conceiving plans of evil, which he now returned into the bosom of Israel to mature.

Absalom was not less quick than Joab to discern the fond attachment of David, and skilfully availed himself of his father's weakness. Unauthorised by the King, and yet not forbidden, he prepared for himself chariots and horses to run before him. A standing such as belonged to no other in Israel was

thus at once given to Absalom; and finding himself unchecked by the King, he went on to avail himself of his position to seduce the hearts of the people. He was wont to rise up early, and to stand "beside the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the King for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the King to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause, might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And in this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the King for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel." Much probably that Absalom said was true. The disorders and sorrows of David's house had no doubt borne heavily on David. His energies, therefore, had become enfeebled: and the influence of his Throne had proportionally waned. His death-bed words sufficiently indicate that he had found it no easy thing to rule. "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." Such is the character,

such the results of the government of a perfect King. But it had been otherwise with David. "My house," said he, "is not so with God." God's eye saw this, and it pitied: Absalom's eye, quickened by Satan, saw it too, but it moved no pity in him. He rejoiced in beholding it—he rejoiced in exposing it—he longed that it might be increased, not lessened. He who designs to seduce the people of God can desire nothing so much as flaws in their government, and weakness in their leaders. The arrow that is directed against weakness may come from the quiver of truth, and therefore may seem to be of God; and yet the hand that sends it may be strengthened and stimulated by the very energy of hell. So was it with Absalom. He discerned failure in David's house; he saw that others discerned it; the occasion was just that which he desired; he pointed out to Israel evils that David had failed to rectify—depreciated David—extolled himself, and Israel received him as "a father of peace" unto them.

Yet David had cherished Absalom. There indeed was one of the chief failures of David as King. He knew that Absalom was thus exalting himself. He knew that the calling of God was not with Absalom, but with another. He knew that Absalom was not of faith: he saw that nature ruled in him, and in his ways: and yet, though knowing all this, he interfered not to restrain him, but knowingly cherished this viper in his bosom.

Living as we now do, at a period when the

results of the past failures of Christianity are teeming around us on every side, and when the best energies of the real Church are enfeebled, and worse than enfeebled, by internal and external evil, we may discern in this relation of David to Absalom a lesson for ourselves. The Church of God long ago chose to unite themselves with things from which God designed to separate them by everlasting barriers. They have cherished among themselves plants of foreign growth—plants, not of the garden of God. They have rejoiced in their luxuriance, and admired their beauty; and have contrasted the vigour of those plants with the sickliness of other plants, which seem to wither, though they belong to God. What wonder then if we should now hear it said by many a mouth, that Christ's truth has failed to give what it promised, and that therefore, other instrumentality must be sought. The ruin and weakness, and division of the people of God is discerned and magnified; and whilst truth seems to have lost all power of systematic influence, Satan is preparing another system, fair, liberal, philanthropic, and more attractive than Absalom in the eyes of men—a system that promises to the nations and to the Church, a peace which the truth of Christ in the hands of his servants has failed to give. Natural principles, which are but infidelity in disguise, are fast supplanting the last rays of revealed truth whose light has lingered in the consciences of men; and

other lights — false lights, are being given, by which they will amuse themselves, and at which they will warm themselves, rejoicing in sparks of their own kindling, until at last, all truth having been surrendered, "strong delusion shall be sent, that they should believe a lie." *

There was no occasion in the life of David, of such deep and accumulated sorrow, as when he fled from the face of Absalom his son. The throne of Israel had been to him God's special gift. He had

* It has been said, that the tendency of an age may be judged of from its popular poetry. Read then, the following lines of the most popular poet of the day :—

"Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light :
The year is dying in the night,
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out *a slowly dying cause*,
And ancient forms of party strife ;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand,
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in *the Christ that is to be*."

The "slowly dying cause" is evidently that of "creed-Christianity"—under which name is really comprehended (as far as the feelings of such writers are concerned) "the faith once delivered to the Saints." Their "coming man" is Antichrist—their panacea, the extirpation of God's revealed truth. Their desires will be accomplished—"we have heard that THE Antichrist shall come."

reached it through years of trial and conflict; and he had valued it as an instrument for serving God's people. But now, he had to struggle for it again, not with Saul, or with Philistines, but with his own son—the son whom he had loved, admired, and cherished. A remembrance of the transgression which had first caused the sword to be sent upon his house, and a sense of the long-continued weakness, which had marked his own government, must have weighed heavily on his spirit. The Mount of Olives, that Mount which has been so often the place of the sorrows of God's servants, even as it will by and by evidence their glory, (see Zech. xiv. 4,) witnessed the bitterness of his sorrow. "And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered: and he went barefoot: and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up." Nor was the humiliation of his heart less deep, or less manifested than his sorrow. Shimei who was of the house of Saul, came out to meet him, and cursed still as he came, saying, "Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial * * * the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man." Such were the words of Shimei, but David resisted not; he meekly bowed to the reproach, and said, "Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life; how much more may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him

curse ; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." And when the Ark of the Covenant of God was brought, David said to them that brought it, "Carry back the Ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and shew me both it, and His habitation. But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee ; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him." He was willing to stand in apparent separation from God, and in apparent subjection to His curse; for such separation, and such curse were not more than he had deserved. He knew also, that if there were any place in which he could be helped in consistency with God's glory, *that* place was one of lowest humiliation. Besides, it was the place in which he could most fitly exercise faith towards God, and cry to Him for deliverance.

He *did* look to God; he *did* cry to Him and His cry was not in vain. Among all the Psalms of David, there is none which more remarkably evidences the triumph of his faith out of depths of affliction and chastisement, than the Psalm which he spake whilst flying "from the face of Absalom his son." There was no unconsciousness of the circumstances—no want of appreciation of the greatness of the danger—for he said, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me ? Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my

soul, There is no help for him in God." Yet, in spite of the words of denunciation, or of despair, thus sounded in his ears by countless tongues, David was still enabled, even as in his earlier years, to encourage himself in God. He trusted in God, not merely as a protector, but as One who would again restore him to the dignity and honour of His service. "But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; *my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.*" Though the dangers were still present, yet in faith he spoke of them as past — the deliverance was future, yet he spoke of it as already come; nor did the near presence of the danger take from him the sweetness of present rest. "I laid me down and slept; I waked; for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone, thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people." Such was the expression of the calm confidence of David, even whilst multiplied dangers were still gathering around him, and whilst the tear was yet falling from his eye. Nor was his confidence in vain. He was restored and allowed again to see Israel in peace—again to prove that God's blessing is upon His people. How precious is the individual use of such a Psalm as this, to every one who, after having backslidden or trespassed, has humbly turned again to the mercies and faithfulness of

God. Even though the tokens of divine rebuke and chastisement be present on every side, even though every tongue may say, "there is no help for him in God," such an one may remember David, and again say, "Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me: my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." Thus, even the sins and chastisements of God's servants are made blessings in result to His people. Their record becomes the means of restoring or strengthening the links which bind to Him in mercy, and grace, and peace for ever.

There is, unquestionably, a time coming, when the value of this Psalm will be peculiarly appreciated by some, at least, among those who are, or who will be directing the energies of the Church of God. He must indeed be blind to the signs of the times, who does not discover that the foul stains that rest on the history of professing Christianity, and the want of energy and truth, and union amongst those who are really under its vital power, are producing in the minds of men an avowed hostility to the thought of making Divine Truth even the professed object of their search, much less the centre of their combinations. Truth, so far as it has been used by men for purposes of government in the earth, has been found productive of so many difficulties, and has led to so many inconsistencies, that very many of those who are concerned in regulating the institutions of society, are becoming most anxious to exclude Christ's truth

from the governmental arrangements of the earth. Civilisation, science, art, the brotherhood of man as man, philanthropic associations based on the common interests of humanity, these and such like things are looked to, as affording new principles, new habits of thought and action, whereby society may be moulded anew, to the exclusion of that supremacy which has hitherto been supposed to be due, in name at least, to the truth of Christ. Many a real Christian is at this moment disseminating books, and encouraging principles, the effects of which are as thoroughly adverse to the due supremacy of Christ, and of His truth, as the fair and flattering words of Absalom, during the years of his insidious murmurings, were adverse to the stability of David's throne. The time will come when the effects of these things will be manifested, and Christianity become in relation to the most civilised and most influential regions of the earth, as the woman in the Revelation. driven into the wilderness by the fury of the ten-horned Dragon. (See Rev. xii.) Then, they who have chiefly guided the energies of the Church, will have indeed reason to weep, and to confess that their forefathers and themselves have, in many ways, greatly erred. In many things they will have to feel that the iniquity of their heels is compassing them round about. Nevertheless, the use of this Psalm, through God's abounding grace, will still be open to them; and some no doubt will use it —use it with a living sense of its blessedness, and like David, encourage themselves in God.

Nevertheless they must not expect similar deliverance *here*. As I have before said, the period of David was one in which God was avowedly subduing all enemies, and remedying all failures among His servants, in order that He might in Solomon, the Prince of Peace, afford the great appointed type of those blessings, which, in Another greater than Solomon, He will finally secure to all His people. But it is otherwise now. The *manifested* dealings of God with Israel and the earth are for the present stayed. Evil is for a season allowed to progress towards its end; until at last, the throne of that Wicked One will be set, who will establish mischief as by a law. Under such circumstances, the people of God may indeed say to Him in faith, "Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory and the lifter up of mine head," but they are words which must be used in *patient* faith; for the "lifting up" of the scattered and fallen Church will not be now. It is reserved for that hour when the day-star shall at length arise upon the dark and troubled scene of conflict and woe, and usher in the day of everlasting triumph. Then, indeed, no element of joy will be wanting to the cup of gladness. Then it will be said understandingly, both in earth and heaven, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever."

VI.

ZIBA —MEPHIBOSHETH.

THE faith of David and his submission to the will of God, shone like a heavenly light in the midst of the deep darkness of this, his last great affliction. Nor was his meekness the only token of God's presence in blessing. There were some around David who were enabled to view his circumstances with the eye of faith. They saw him weak — dishonoured — chastened; but they still recognised him to be the servant of God. They resolved therefore, whilst others turned away, to cleave to him the more closely, and unreservedly to share his destinies. David urged them to leave him; but they steadfastly refused. They would not add to the sorrow of one whom God loved, even though he was stricken. They would not abandon him who was still the king of Israel, even though for the present, his place was a wilderness and not a throne.

Seldom, however, does the providence of God open any peculiar sphere to the faith, or service of His children, without an agent of Satan being prepared to introduce some element of evil whereby

the perfectness of the service is marred, or its efficacy hindered. Among those who acknowledged David in the day of his calamity, there was one who seemed to surpass all others in kindness and in liberality. This was Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, the grandson of Saul. Anxious apparently for the comfort of David and his band, Ziba met them with asses saddled, and bread, and raisins, and wine: and when David said, "What meanest thou by these?" Ziba answered and said, "The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink. And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father."

"A wicked man," saith the Scripture, "taketh a gift out of his bosom to pervert the ways of judgment." It is true indeed, that David did not *know* that Ziba was wicked. His unexpected kindness came at a time when almost every other hand was either paralysed by terror, or else armed against him in active enmity. No doubt at such a moment, it required great self-possession to pause, and to withhold the tongue from rashly pronouncing judgment. But David was a king, and it behoved a king to be wisely cautious. Experience might have taught him that the heart of man is subtle, greedy after its own aggrandisement, envious, and ready to

accuse: he might have learned also, that there are few things the heart is so ready to believe as accusation: and that "if a ruler hearken unto lies, all his servants will be wicked." Mephibosheth had given David no reason to suspect his fidelity. Why then should Ziba be so easily believed? Why should Mephibosheth be condemned — undefended, and unheard?

David however, was ensnared. Kindness overcame him. The rash sentence passed his lips. "Thine," said he to Ziba, "be all that pertaineth unto Mephibosheth." Mephibosheth was thus suddenly stripped of all that he had — his servant exalted — himself beggared. And yet what had Mephibosheth done? He had earnestly desired not only to acknowledge David, but to *follow* him. He had wished to be the companion of his dangers, and the associate of his dishonour, but Ziba had deceived and hindered him. When David at last returned triumphant, Mephibosheth met him. And David said, "Wherefore wentest thou not with me, Mephibosheth? and he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me; for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame. And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king." Thus Mephibosheth had desired to do what Ziba had *not* done; for Ziba, though he had met David with a present (a present indeed drawn from the stores of another) had nevertheless not *followed* David. Anxious apparently lest he should suffer if

Absalom were to succeed, he seems to have retired to Shimei and the Benjamites, to secure his interests with them; for he was found, when the King returned, in the train of Shimei—that same Shimei who had cursed David. If Absalom had prospered, Ziba no doubt would have pleaded that he had not been one of the followers of David; nay more, that he had prevented Mephibosheth from following him; and as for the gifts, he could easily have accounted for *them* by an alleged necessity of yielding to his master's will, or by some similar fiction—for plausibility is always at the command of an unscrupulous tongue. But whilst Ziba was thus found with the enemies of David when David returned, what during this time had been the condition of Mephibosheth? He had mourned after David: "he had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace:" and when David, shrinking apparently from the frank confession of his error, reversed half only of his unrighteous sentence, and hastily said, as if vexed and angered, "Why speakest thou any more of thy matters?" I have said, "Thou and Ziba divide the land:" Mephibosheth meekly answered, "Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house." What words ever entered the ear of David more expressive of value for his person, and for his office than these—words worthy of the son of him who loved David as his own soul? Yet David made no reply—no

confession. Mephibosheth—the faithful, affectionate, devoted Mephibosheth—the son of Jonathan, David's friend, retired dishonoured from the presence of the King. Thus Satan's end was answered; a dark blot was made to rest upon that which would otherwise have been one of the brightest and fairest pages in the history of David. The King had failed in judgment.

It was the remembrance, we may believe, of failures such as these, that caused David to say, in his dying hour, that it was needful that Another should come to be that which he had not been—One more righteous than himself to rule perfectly in the fear of God—One more mighty than himself to subject thoroughly the proud power of evil. "The God of Israel hath said, The Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands: but the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place."

Such were the last words of the Psalmist of Israel—words of deep confession, but yet of confidence and hope; for they were *prophetic* words. Although in respect of the past, he had to speak of himself, and to speak mournfully; yet in respect of the future, he could prophesy of Another, and *there* all was triumph. Indeed, all his Psalms were Songs, because they all referred, more or less, to things yet to come. Hope is the sun-beam that gives to the songs of the sweet Psalmist of Israel their brightness, and hope has respect to the future. Though it was peculiarly his to triumph out of affliction, and to see God's people triumph with him, and though such triumphs were in themselves precious, yet their chief preciousness consisted in this, that they were types of things yet to come. Types indeed, in one sense are but shadows, and shadows pass away; yet as shadows appointed of God, they are the pledge of realities to come, and form the ground of faith's substantial joy.

VII.

SOLOMON.

ISRAEL, under David reached, and under Solomon passed, the culminating point of their typical greatness. Notwithstanding all their transgressions, God would not permit the long-merited chastisement of subjection to the Gentiles to fall nationally upon them, until their history had first supplied the types of those blessings, which it is His final purpose to bestow. Moses as their deliverer from Egypt, and their legislator—Aaron as their priest—Joshua as introducing them into the land of their inheritance—David as establishing them in the citadel of strength on Zion—all severally foreshadowed Him who is destined to bear all these offices, without the weakness, and without the failure of those who typically held them. The types however of Israel's glory were not complete until Solomon came. It was his to act in that place of established peace and supremacy which the conflicts of David had attained. The sword was the emblem of the one; the sceptre of peace, of the other. It was the King of peace, not the conqueror, that was to build the Temple of the Lord, and to make Israel know the difference between action and rest; between blessings struggled

for, and blessings reached and developed in their results.

We have already seen that, from the earliest period of Israel's history, the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord had been among them in all their wanderings, and throughout all their conflicts—the token of God's presence amongst His people, as their leader and their guide. The right order of Israel's instruction and Israel's worship depended on the Ark being duly sought unto in the appointed manner, in its own proper dwelling-place: and that dwelling-place was a Tabernacle or Tent—the token of unfixedness of habitation, the evidence that the place of established rest was not yet attained. And even when the energy of David had recovered the Ark from the place of its virtual banishment, and placed it in the citadel of Zion—a place of strength, the like to which it had never occupied before, yet still it left not its curtain dwelling-place. It might sojourn but it would not abidingly dwell in a place which was a citadel of warlike strength, won and still maintained by the sword of conflict. The sword must be laid aside—all enemies must be thoroughly subdued—the hand of Israel and of Israel's King must be washed from the stain of blood, before a place could be prepared in which the Ark of the Lord should be able to dwell for ever. Conflict is not peace; destruction is not heavenly blessing. Present experience daily teaches us that the assailment or resistance of error is not the same thing as edification in truth. Indeed, it is very

possible that progress in the truth may cease whilst the energies are being occupied in opposing error; and of this the recent history of Protestantism affords many a sad example.

Accordingly, it was reserved for Solomon, the Prince of Peace, to build the Temple of the Lord. Then the Ark entered into its abiding rest. The staves by which it had been borne so long, the tokens therefore of its pilgrim condition, were now drawn out, so as no longer to be seen. Nothing remained in the Ark itself, except the Tables of the Covenant. The golden pot of hidden manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, had been in it during its wilderness condition, as types of mercies in reserve—mercies hidden with God. But when the time of establishment has come, the mercies at present hidden are to be manifested, and not any longer to be held in reserve. Christ, now typified by the *hidden* rod of power and by the manna *hidden*, will then be manifested as effecting all that mighty power can effect, in aiding by his might, and feeding by His grace His ransomed people. Nothing therefore remained in the Ark except the Law, that witness of the unchanged holiness of God, and the Ark was covered by the mercy-seat—a mercy-seat that had been sprinkled with blood: and over the mercy-seat were the cherubim of glory. The types of holiness, of redemption, and of glory were thus combined. "Mercy and truth had met together, righteousness and peace had kissed each other:" and yet more, on the ground of their having thus

met, God was now entering into a new relation to His people, even one of fixedness and established rest for ever. Nothing that is transitory can perfectly satisfy the heart. Indeed, there is a sting that none but God can remedy in all blessings that pass away: but when the power of perfect blessing is present, never more to be removed, what is wanting to the completeness of the joy? Typically, it was so then. As soon as the Priests had borne the Ark into its resting place, and quitted the sanctuary as those who had finished their work, nothing was heard save the sound of thanksgiving and praise, nothing was seen in the sanctuary save glory filling the house. "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place; * * * also the Levites, which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets; it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of

God." It was meet that ministration *towards* God should be suspended; for it was an hour characterised, not by ministration *toward* God, but by ministration *from* Him, out of the riches of His own grace and glorious power. The peculiar feature of the hour was that God was about to *give*—Israel and the earth about to *receive*, blessing. It was the manifestation of Melchisedek, who came to bless rather than to receive.

Yet all that marvellous and glorious scene was but a type. It stood in the same relation to the yet future hour of Israel's blessing under the true Solomon, as did the first man, who was earthy, to the second man "the Lord from Heaven:" or as did the hour when Aaron in garments of glory and beauty stood by the side of Moses and blessed the people, to that coming hour when the eternal Priest and King shall return in glory, "without sin, unto salvation." Yet although that scene is a shadow, not substance, yet as given of God, it stands as a memorial and pledge of things soon to be fulfilled, for which we wait. The glory and the joy of the great coming day will be as much greater than the glory and joy and thanksgiving of that typical day, as heaven is greater than earth—as Christ is greater than Solomon. The holy places made with hands which Solomon builded, will then have as their manifested antitypes, Heaven itself, and the Heavenly city—the new Jerusalem. They will be seen as "the heavenly places not made with hands;" whilst Jerusalem on earth, the converted, sanctified

Jerusalem, will become the earthly court of the Temple of the great King. The blessings prepared shall not fail for want of an administrative hand of adequate wisdom, and holiness, and power; for Christ Himself shall reign in righteousness, and "minister judgment to the peoples in uprightness." "The government shall be upon His shoulder * * * Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." (Isaiah ix. 6, 7.) When David had prayed for these things, it is said, his prayers ended. "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." (Psalm lxxii.) When his eyes shall at last behold these things, his prayers shall be answered—his desires fulfilled.

The presence of the glory of God, therefore, was not the only blessing of that typical day. There was provided in Solomon, one who should instrumentally control the distribution of the blessings given, that they might be diffused aright, and applied according to the design of Him who gave them. Endowed with understanding from God (see 1 Kings iv. 30)—wise in judgment—instructed even in the secrets of nature—able to speak of trees from the cedar that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall—admired and consulted by Kings and nations—reigning from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt, Solomon stood as

a type, imperfect indeed, but yet a type of Him in whom essential wisdom dwells; and who will by and by apply that wisdom to the regulation of human life throughout all nations—able not merely to control men externally (which was all that Solomon could do), but able also to reign in the heart—competent not only to use aright that which is present, but having also almighty creative power to supply that which is lacking—ruling not merely from the river to Egypt, but from the river unto the ends of the earth; for "all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him"—reigning not merely in Jerusalem, but "setting His glory *above the Heavens;*" (Ps. viii.) when He will reign, having all things put in subjection under Him. "His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed." (Psalm lxxii.)

The day of Solomon ended in darkness. God ceased — men ceased — to call him blessed. The earthen vessel was broken, and all that would now remain for us would be, to mourn hopelessly over its ruin, if we did not know it as a type of another that shall remain in excellency and beauty for ever. After Solomon, darkness began steadily to settle in. Israel and Jerusalem were swept away. Christianity succeeded. *That* has similarly failed; and now the black night of antichristian apostasy is drawing nigh.

It is in the midst of this dark scene that the true

Head of Israel, He of whom David was but the type, has found the sphere for His sufferings, and for His conflicts—conflicts which, though indeed prolonged, shall end at last in triumph and in victory, such as David never knew. Christ's conflict with the power of evil was not terminated when His own personal sorrows in the flesh ended. Though personally absent, He is still by His Spirit present, and suffers in the sufferings and conflicts of His servants. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME." His Spirit still struggles against the corruptions *amongst* His people, as well as against the power of the enemy without. The principles of Saul, of Doeg, of Shimei, and of Absalom, are still seen on every side; and they prosper. Nor will it be otherwise yet. Evil will continue to flourish for a season; and they who have the Spirit of Christ must be content to mourn, and to say, "Lord, how long?"

It is true indeed, that the personal exaltation of Christ and His return unto His own proper glory, does enable the Church already to anticipate by faith many of those blessings, which in their manifested and full results, belong only to the great coming day of triumph and peace. We can already say, "*seated*," (and that is a word of establishment and rest) "seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We already receive from God a strength which is "according to the working of that mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right

hand:" nor will the future establishment of God's truth and glory in the earth, be any thing more than a bringing things below into correspondency with the present condition of Him, who as the Lord of all things, and as the Prince of the Kings of the earth, is (though His title is at present not enforced) already established in the heavens. It is thus that the Church is at the same time cognisant of things as opposed one to the other as heaven is contrasted with earth, or Christ with Satan. Whilst, because one with its glorified Head, it knows above, heights of glory unspeakable, and a fulness of love passing knowledge; in the earth, it practically realises the augmented and still unceasing sorrows of that "evil day" in which the ruler of the darkness of this age, yet unsubjected, is marshalling his powers for his last great struggle. Thus there is at once the knowledge of joy and of sorrow—of light, and of darkness, of good, and of evil: yet we are able to add, through God's abounding mercy, that the knowledge of the evil is temporal, but the knowledge of the good is eternal. Happy are they who walk in the comfort of the light—unterrified by the present depth of darkness, unattracted by the false lights which Satan kindles in its midst.

It is this connection of the Church with rest and peace and glory above, whilst at the same time it remains in conflict with all fulness of evil beneath, that enables it to use the *whole* of Scripture, as in some way or other, applicable to its own condition.

The being able to say, "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (words not true of our present *personal* condition on the earth, but true of us as viewed in Christ, our risen Head), our title to say this, opens to our use the principles and the joys of the new creation: whilst the being obliged to add, that the age of evil shall not pass away until all its predicted course of wickedness has been fully run, makes us equally cognisant, practically, of every form of iniquity that Scripture has recorded, from the destruction of Abel to the revelation of Antichrist. Therefore, whilst the history of David and his conflicts supplies many a lesson suited to our present position here, we have also access, by faith, to a rest already secured for us above the heavens, and we are able to speak in a manner that David could not, of being "established" in Him, who has not only died, but who has also risen for us. (2 Cor. v. 15.) The time is drawing nigh when the David-season of conflict shall for ever cease; when the true David shall finally say of His enemies, "then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind; I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets." The 18th Psalm, from which these words are taken, is the last celebration of triumph over the might of opposing adversaries; and when that shall be fulfilled, the day of peace will have come: David will give place to Solomon, and the true Prince of peace shall reign for ever.

VIII.

JONATHAN—JOAB.

If the Scripture had been made the record of perfectness only, it must have been restricted to the history of One alone, even of Him who never swerved in outward deed or in inward feeling from the strict rule of holiness and truth, "who loved righteousness, and hated iniquity" and who shall therefore be manifested as the One only perfect, whom God "hath anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." But the Scripture is not the record of good only. It teaches us respecting evil also, not merely as seen in its pure unmitigated forms, but in its more insidious working among God's own saints, where it ever seeks (and oft-times successfully) to hinder their grace, and to mar their service in result.

The servants of God cannot too carefully remember, even when their desires are right towards God, yet that those desires may be frustrated in result, by some relation that may subsist between themselves and others. Entanglement with others may hold us back from good, or even connect us with activity of evil. We may become partakers of other men's

sins. If the faith and energies of David had been submitted to Saul, and made the servant of his will, what would David's history have become? He might have perished with his master on the mountains of Gilboa, but he never would have known either the wilderness or the throne.

The history of Jonathan, the friend of David, lovely, and, in many respects, excellent as it is, is chiefly important as teaching us the sad results that flow from subserviency to others who are acting in contrariety to God. The energy of Jonathan was not inferior to that of David, or of any other who had before appeared in Israel. The first movement of faith recorded under the reign of Saul, originated exclusively in Jonathan. The Philistines were strong—Israel peculiarly weak; and Saul so far from taking the place of an assailant, sent Israel away, "every one to his tent." Three thousand only were retained, of whom one thousand were assigned to Jonathan as a kind of guard of honour in his native city. But inactivity ill suited Jonathan: his soul longed for service against the enemies of Israel and Israel's God. Accordingly, he arose and smote a neighbouring garrison of the Philistines. Saul, proud, impetuous, and easily elated, exulted in the triumph, proclaimed it, and blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear." He spoke to *Israel,* but he called them *Hebrews.* Israel, a title given of God to the people whom He had chosen, sounded in the ear of faith very differently from "Hebrews," which was their

mere natural name: yet "Hebrews" was the name that Saul preferred. It would seem as if his soul had never appreciated the difference between being the head of a nation that was like unto other nations, and being the head of the chosen separated people of God.

Israel heard the proclamation. They heard that Saul (for Jonathan was not mentioned) had smitten the Philistines, and no doubt they rejoiced with him. But their joy was very brief. What can be more disastrous than being led by others into circumstances which we have no grace to appreciate; no faith to act in aright? Neither Saul nor Israel had risen against the Philistines; the attack and the triumph were Jonathan's, not theirs. And now, when the consequences of that act began to be felt, when it was found that the boastful notes of Saul's trumpets had reached the Philistines also, and that their vexed and angry hosts were assembling for vengeance, all trembled. Never scarcely, was there a scene of greater dismay in Israel. "The people hid themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits;" and some even fled over Jordan, not satisfied until they had placed its waters between themselves and their irritated foes. The few that did remain with Saul, "followed him trembling."

Yet the resources of Israel, which were not natural merely, had not really failed; and it was open to Saul to avail himself of them if he would only wait on God and obey Him. One of the chief

mercies that had been granted to Israel, was the gift of Samuel, the Prophet of God. Saul had often proved the value of Samuel, and he did not forget him now. He sent for Samuel; but Samuel delayed to come. Faith would have waited; but Saul was not of faith. Nature ruled in him; and nature will not wait. Accordingly, when Samuel came not, Saul determined to act without him, and to sacrifice, even though he well knew that God had forbidden *him* to sacrifice. He sacrificed however: the deed of disobedience was committed, and then Samuel came. But he came only to upbraid. He denounced the deed that Saul had committed, and departed, leaving Israel and Saul in worse exigency than before.

But when the *official* resources with which God may have supplied his people fail—utterly fail, He has other resources, secret, and *unofficial*, which by His own power He can develop, and so work salvation. Saul had effected nothing. He had made one effort: but he had made it so as to turn blessing into curse. There was no hope for Israel in its *official* head; yet apparently they thought of no other. Jonathan was in the midst of Israel, but we find not even the mention of his name. Saul was prominent in every thing, and Jonathan forgotten. Nevertheless, *his* faith had not failed; it remained firm and vigorous as when he first smote the garrison of Philistia. Unterrified by the panic of Israel—undismayed even by the failure of Israel's king, he remembered that Israel were still God's

people, and that the Philistines were still God's enemies. Alone therefore, (save that his armour-bearer followed him,) he left the camp of Israel, and approached the strong-hold of the Philistines. Yet he advanced not rashly. Faith is not rash towards God. He advanced considerately, waiting for a sign. The sign was given; he confronted the foe, and triumphed. The Philistines said when they first discerned him, "Behold, the *Hebrews* come forth out of the holes," but Jonathan said, "The Lord hath delivered them into the hand of *Israel.*" He did not say, The Lord hath delivered them into *my* hand, nor into the hands of the *Hebrews*, but he said, "The Lord hath delivered them into the hand of *Israel*"—for Israel he knew was a name of blessing pertaining to that people whom God had made His people, and that fact constituted the ground of Jonathan's hope. Nor was his faith in vain. There was never perhaps a time, when Israel triumphed more signally than then.

It was a day of grace — unmerited grace — a day that received its distinctive characteristic from the spontaneous goodness of God in sending strength, and working deliverance. It was therefore in harmony with the character of such a day, that Jonathan, faint at last and weary from the long-continued struggle, should find provision made to refresh his weariness, and revive his failing strength. Still following the flying foe, he entered a wood, and found honey dropping around him from the trees. He thought not of resting; he wished

for no repose: his heart was set on following out the purposes of God against God's and Israel's enemies. Any thing that could aid him in this he welcomed. The honey, therefore, came to him as a gift from God. Hastily dipping into it his rod (for he would not tarry) he tasted. His strength revived, and he went on to further conflict. The honey therefore was no snare, no hindrance to *him*. On the contrary, it was God's method for supplying his need; nor do the natural gifts of God's goodness ever hinder those who use them merely as helps in fighting the fight of faith. Israel would have been blessed with double victory, and preserved too from dire transgression, if they also had eaten of the honey on that day.

That day would indeed have been one of unmixed joy to Israel, if the faith of Jonathan who had ushered in its blessing, had been allowed to give to it its character throughout. But Saul too acted. Helpless and motionless until Jonathan had virtually conquered, Saul followed in his wake, and commenced his connexion with this day of blessing and of grace, by uttering words of curse. "Cursed," said he, "be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on MINE enemies." His words were either intended as a vow whereby he wished to propitiate heaven and purchase the favour which God in grace was giving; or else they were the expression of his own lordly will, reckless of the sufferings of his servants, and careless of their needs, if so be only his own selfish interest

were secured. But whatever his motive, woe followed in result. The enemy were not destroyed; Israel were driven into sin (for they satiated in their own way the hunger which God had not been allowed to satisfy in His) and afterward, *in intention*, Saul became the destroyer of his own son. Such were the black lines of evil drawn by the hand of Saul across the brightness of that day of grace and blessing. Had Saul forgotten Jephthah? Jephthah vowed in a day of grace; he introduced the thought of human agency into a day marked as one devoted to the agency of God, and wished to purchase, where God was giving; and Jephthah closed his day of triumph in agony and in woe.

And see the inconsistency of evil. Known and solemn commandments of God, Saul hesitated not to break. God had forbidden *him* to sacrifice; yet he would sacrifice; God had commanded Amalek to be destroyed, but Saul would *not* destroy them. In these cases he found no difficulty in violating the commandments of God. But his own commandment — a commandment he had invented for himself, must not be broken, no, not even if its observance involved the necessity of shedding the blood of Jonathan himself. Such is the hypocrisy of self-willed pride. At one moment it daringly tramples down the principles of truth and holiness, and spurns the barriers which God's own hand has raised: at another, it vaunts its subjection to the claims of duty, and proclaims the painfulness of the submission which it ostentatiously renders to

the requirements of God—pretended or self-imposed requirements. Would that we could say that such inconsistencies were no longer seen; but they still abound. They are ever marked by loud professions of subjection to God and to His Spirit; and these professions terrify the simple. But let the proud claim be tested: selfishness and pride will soon be seen to be the spring of every thought, the guide of every action. The meekness is false — the devotedness is fictitious. Let this be discerned, and the spell is broken.

Jonathan therefore, dwelling in the midst of circumstances such as these, must have been trained in a school of peculiar sorrow. He could not but be sensible of the entire unfitness of Saul for the place that he was holding in Israel. Every day added fresh evidence of his father's incompetency, and his heart must continually have felt what his lips sometimes were constrained to express, that his father was he who troubled Israel. He saw around him perpetual proofs of God's blessing being steadily withdrawn; and he must often have remembered the words of Samuel, when he said unto Saul, "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue; for the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people." Bitter words for Jonathan, when we re-

member how thoroughly he had the heart of a king —how well he had proved his qualifications to lead Israel to victory, and to honour. Nevertheless, though he must have felt the rejection to be bitter, there was perhaps never a heart among any of the mere human servants of God, that learned to bow with more entire submission to His will, and to rejoice in another's prosperity as if it had been his own. When his rival at length appeared,— he who was to wear, in place of himself, the crown of Israel, —instead of hating him because he was his rival, he discerned his excellency, acknowledged his qualifications, and loved him. The songs of the women of Israel, as they celebrated David, aroused in Jonathan no jealousy. In vain his father upbraided, saying that he had chosen the son of Jesse to his own confusion; his heart was still faithful in its love, still true to its apprehension of David's excellency. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

It can hardly be questioned that there was much of natural affection in the attachment of Jonathan to David, and this perhaps may account for his not being found with David in the wilderness, and in the cave of Adullam. In reviewing the relation of Jonathan to David, fair and lovely as it is, we can easily trace in it elements of feeling, very different from those which marked the words of Elisha, when he said unto Elijah, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." Jonathan

wept over David bitterly, yet Jonathan left David. The affection of friendship whenever it forms a too prevailing element in the attachment we bear towards the servants of the Lord, is like clay mingled with iron, or like silken threads woven into the contexture of the cable's strength. Weakness is insinuated into the whole: it will not bear the stress of circumstances: it cannot be trusted in the day of storm and tempest. Natural feelings, various, and often conflicting in their character, may easily be brought into competition one with the other, but where Truth really forms the bond, the principles of Truth jar not with each other: they know of no competition among themselves. He who beholds his friend in the light in which strong natural affection presents him, is little likely to estimate fully his friend's position as a servant of God. Whilst Jonathan was considering how dear David was to himself, he was less likely to remember the excellency of David's relation to Israel and to God. The love that he bore to Saul his father and to his father's house, might well come into competition with the love that he bore to David as his friend: but if he had been able to divest himself of these personal feelings, and to contemplate David only as the servant of God — if he had only seen in him the appointed centre around which the interests of truth and of Israel were to revolve, and had looked upon David in the cave of Adullam, in the light in which Ruth beheld Naomi, or Elisha contemplated Elijah, could he have left him then? Would not

the same faith that brought him up against the strong-hold of the Philistines have turned him towards the wilderness in which David dwelt? To see God in the servants of God, is a different thing from seeing simply *them*. Ruth spake not the words of mere natural affection when she said to Naomi, "Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part me and thee."

The more sensitive the conscience—the more it appreciates its responsibilities, and keeps itself open to the claims of duty, the more sure it is to mistrust any path towards which mere natural affection strongly tends: and in such a case, affection if it has leaned towards Truth, may prove a hindrance to Truth being followed. The soul will probably dread lest it should be pleasing itself under the pretence of pleasing God, and if friendship or affection have been allowed unduly to preponderate in the view that we have taken of the truth and its servants, the decision (when decision must be made) is very likely to be contrary both to it and them. Even then if Jonathan had loved his parent less than he did, (he appears to have loved him fervently, they were not divided in life, nor in death,) yet probably his sensitive soul would still have dreaded (and justly so) to put the claim of mere affection towards David in competition with that of *duty* towards his parent. He seemed not sufficiently to remember

that a duty more imperative than any that could be due to the claim of natural relation, might and did bind him to David. If he had loved David as a friend less exclusively—if he had thought of him as a servant of the Lord more constantly, he would not have dreaded, as he probably did, the wrong power of affection. Affection and duty *may* possibly unite around the same object. Mary the mother of the Lord, loved Him as her Son, her first-born. But was that the link that bound her to Him and to His sorrows, or did she recognise in Him the Saviour of Israel—God her Redeemer?

But whatever the reasons, the fact cannot be disputed, that when Scripture records in honourable series, the names of the mighty of Israel who were with David in the hold, the name of Jonathan is not there. None of them indeed could rival Jonathan in beauty of character, or surpass the past triumphs of his faith. There were few, if any, among them, in whom David's soul delighted. Nevertheless, in consequence of being linked to him by whom God was working His work of blessing, they were drawn together with him within the circle of honour. *There* was found the strength of Israel — *there* was the sphere of Israel's true prowess and renown—*there* were they whom God was using for His own purposes of blessing towards His people. *They* were being used, whilst Jonathan, as one forgotten or unknown, pined in the courts of Saul, like another Samson shorn of his strength and made the servant of another's will. From the moment when David

quitted the house of Saul, and the strength of Israel travelled with him into the wilderness, no deed of faith is recorded of Jonathan. Neutralised and inactive, he seems to have become as nothing; for he trod not the path that Israel's strength was treading. Better indeed to be nothing, than to put forth power for the support of that which is striving against God: better that energy should be extinguished, rather than be cast as a weight into the scale of evil. The link that bound Jonathan to Saul was never broken here. It fettered him to the last, until he fell dishonoured on the mountains of Gilboa — a solemn memorial to all who think that personal grace can atone for wrongness of position. Personal grace cannot sanctify evil, nor force it into channels of good. The brightest lamp cannot penetrate impenetrable blackness. Many a light is borne into the deep caverns of the earth, there to glimmer and expire, quenched by the foul breath of subterranean darkness.

Yet whilst we thus see in Jonathan the sorrowful effect of wrong position on personal grace of highest character, we must nevertheless remember, that the want of such grace cannot be compensated for by rightness of position. Indeed, the deficiency is likely to become more marked, and the results more disastrous, by means of the very opportunities for increased activity, which rightness of position affords. What can be more disastrous than energy unsubjected to God? It is disastrous in any sphere; but most of all, when acting within the narrowed

precincts of those who are sharing the sufferings or conflicts of the Truth.

Among the followers and closest adherents of David, Joab was one. He was early found with David in the cave. Whilst Jonathan tarried in the courts of Saul, Joab was sharing the hardships and the dangers of David in the wilderness. Throughout all his subsequent dangers, he stood like a lion at his side, and if extent of outward service were regarded, David perhaps had no such servant as he. Yet in order to serve David aright, it was necessary to have respect not to his office merely, but also to appreciate the character of him who bore that office; to love him for his own as well as for his office sake, and above all, to remember that no real service could be rendered to David, except God were reverently regarded, and reverently obeyed. We may serve, because of the dignity of his office, one whose excellency as an individual we care not for. In such a case, our service, however energetic, will probably originate in self-interest, and its course will be marked by self-will and pride. Joab seldom failed to think of the interests of David's crown. He believed that it was best that the crown should be on David's brow; and in sustaining the interests of that crown he knew that he was sustaining his own interests too. But however anxiously or even plaintively David might make known his desires—however decidedly he might express his judgment, or declare his resolutions, Joab never hesitated, whenever he had the opportunity to out-

rage the feelings of David, or to disobey his will, if he could thereby gratify his own desires, without at the same time compromising the stability of David's throne. In such a case, he regarded neither David nor God.

If Joab had loved David, if he had regarded him as a friend, would he have so recklessly despised the anguish of David's heart, and made him say, "Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" When David had pledged his royal word to Abner and Amasa for their preservation, would Joab, if he had feared God, or respected the desires of David, or regarded his honour as king, have twice incurred the guilt of treacherous murder? Many a time had David to say, "Though an anointed king, I am weak, because of you, ye sons of Zeruiah,"—he said "sons of Zeruiah," for Joab's brothers were like himself. Proud of his own sacrifices on behalf of David; able to recount, and to recount with truth, conflicts and perils unnumbered, Joab seemed to act as if none had a title to dispute his lordly will—as if no judgment were so sure as his, no arm so prompt, no execution so efficient. If David had been Solomon—if the typical day of established righteousness and peace had come, we should doubtless have seen Joab smitten or restrained. But a time of conflict—a time while the enemies are yet lifting up the head, is not a time for final rectification. Joab therefore continued: his evil ripened: and David was obliged to bear it. Nor is it otherwise now. Many a Joab-like spirit

yet puts forth its energies amongst the professing, and not unfrequently among the real people of Christ, whose course probably will never be stopped, until "God ariseth to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth."

During Absalom's rebellion, Joab, as might have been expected, was most true to David; for he had no desire to see David destroyed, or to see his government supplanted, and another order substituted instead. Joab well knew that all this was in the heart of Absalom, and therefore he was ready to resist him unto death. He had no desire to see the order of David's government changed. On the contrary, he wished that it should be continued; and continued in David's person, so long as circumstances seemed to permit. He therefore fought against Absalom: but as years rolled on, and when David, through excess of age, had virtually become as dead, and no provision had been made for supplying a successor to the throne, it was only in keeping with the character of Joab that he should devise what seemed to him most expedient for the future interests of David's house and for his own interest in connection therewith. Accordingly, without any view apparently of dethroning David, and merely having for his object the establishment of his kingdom in a successor, he united with Adonijah. But in doing this, he thwarted the determinate resolve, not of David merely, but of God; and placed himself in a position where the sword of Solomon (to whom it belonged to accom-

plish the necessary inflictions of righteousness, in order that no fostered evil might disturb the perfectness of peace) necessarily fell on him as a transgressor. His hoar head, according to the commandment of David, was brought down to the grave with blood. The fall of Jonathan on the mountains of Gilboa, was not so terrible as this: the lesson taught thereby was not so solemn.

Few will doubt that Jonathan was a saint of God: but he was living under a dispensation of Law. *Dispensationally* he was under law, not under grace; and therefore his history was probably intended to evidence that even the amiabilities of nature, if indulged, can, when dealt with in law, be neither remedied nor pardoned. The Law can detect—expose—condemn, but it neither remedies nor pardons. Even Moses, whilst dealt with under Law, was not permitted to enter the land of Canaan, but died in the wilderness, because of having spoken unadvisedly with his lips. Nevertheless, the same Moses, under grace, stood on the Mount of Transfiguration, glorified with his Lord. The Corinthians in the days of the Apostle Paul, exhibited not weakness merely, but rebellious evil; yet the Corinthians (for they were ostensibly, as well as actually, under grace and not under Law) were recovered and blessed even here. The Apostle met their evil firmly, but patiently, in the long-suffering wisdom of grace — admonishing where he might have upbraided—beseeching where he might have smitten: and the result was godly sorrow, repentance and restoration.

It is true, indeed, that our frowardness and self-will may resist even the gentleness of grace. If it be so, God is not destitute of means to vindicate His own holiness, and to teach us that He is God, He can teach us either by the bitterness of present chastisement; or by the abundance of the "wood, hay, and stubble" found in that final day, when, though every one whose feet are on the Rock shall be saved, many will nevertheless apprehend the difference between receiving a reward, and suffering loss by seeing the results of self-willed and disobedient energy committed like stubble to the flames.

In the present hour of the Church's weakness, when the energy which it once had whilst standing as "the pillar and ground of the truth" has departed; and when many are tempted to devise some plan whereby the imperilled interests of Truth may be preserved, it is likely that many a self-devised scheme should be adopted, very contrary to the thoughts of Christ, and of God. The suspension of the energies of Truth may make it seem as if its throne were virtually vacated. We may therefore think ourselves at liberty to take expediency for our guide, and to select our own means for filling that Throne and maintaining its supremacy. Joab did not, like Absalom, desire to subvert the Throne of David: he wished rather to preserve it; and it was for this he selected Adonijah. But Adonijah was not Solomon. Adonijah was not he with whom the covenant blessing of the God of Israel was. Thus

there may be many at the present hour, who, undeceived by the smooth words of Sadducean liberalism, and detecting in them deadly hostility to Christ and to His Truth, escape the toils of Absalom; and yet, whilst seeking to uphold in their own way and perhaps for their own purposes, the interests of Truth, they may devise means and adopt principles as foreign to the intentions of God, as Joab's self-willed exaltation of Adonijah.

There are no principles which God recognises as His, save those which will characterize the true Solomon when manifested in His glory. Allegiance to any other principles is rebellion and sin: and yet what principles are less recognised in the Church of God? Scorned by the world, neglected by the Church, they languish in obscurity: but suddenly, at an hour men think not, God will own them, and establish them according to their own intrinsic excellency, and give them supremacy for evermore.

It belongs not to us to resuscitate departed energies, or to restore Truth to the dominion which it once held in the Church of God. But we may refuse to desert it: we may cleave to it, and serve it in the days of its widowhood and sorrow. Some exulting in its fall would bury it like a putrifying corpse, and substitute in its stead something else, fair and attractive to the human eye. Others pretend to consult and provide for its interests by means unsanctioned and unappointed of God. In either case we have to beware. The period when the season of the Truth's conflicts is about to ter-

imnate in glory, is likely to be one of weakness, and of trial. Even the faithful servants of David, in their typical day, found it so. But they waited, and they waited not in vain. At last the day of the glory of Solomon came, and did it repent them then that they had waited for it ?

It is true indeed, that David even in his weakness was still David; whereas now, where is a David or even a Jonathan found throughout all the Church of God? Our energies, even when not mis-directed, seem fallen to the lowest ebb. Nevertheless Christ remaineth, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is able, however great the weakness, to give "grace unto the humble." The Church cannot lose its *kingly* calling — it has not ceased to be a *royal* Priesthood unto God; and they who wait on His grace may yet find some paths open to their feet, in following which, they may find *encouragement*, as well as instructions in the sufferings, and restorations, and triumphs of DAVID THE KING. "Blessed are they that sow beside all waters." "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

DAVID AND THE THRESHING-FLOOR OF ARAUNAH THE JEBUSITE.

It was a great honour to the "holy men of God" who were of old, to be used by the Holy Ghost as His instruments in unveiling the future, and declaring the purposes of God. But it was an added honour when by their deeds of faith, or by their endurance, they were caused practically to foreshadow the path of the coming Head and Ruler of Israel, whose sufferings and whose glories it was the chief object of their prophecies to unfold.

Among the Prophets no one so fully as David delineated the bitterness of the sufferings of the Messiah of Israel. Isaiah more clearly declared the *reason* of Christ's sufferings, and revealed *why* "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter;" but no one so fully as David describes the character and intensity of His agony. See for example the twenty-second Psalm—the Psalm of the Cross. "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." No where in the Old Testament do we find descriptions of Christ's personal anguish so minute and so vivid

as in the twenty-second and like Psalms. On the other hand, where do we find more clear and amplified descriptions of His coming reign in glory? Take Psalms viii., xviii., lxxii., xcvii., cx., as examples. "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad: let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth." Ps. xcvi.

"God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the Gentiles [עַל-גּוֹיִם]. God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the peoples [עַמֵּי] are gathered together [as] the people [עַם] of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted." Ps. xlvii. 5—9.

But whilst David was thus honoured in being empowered to pourtray so vividly the personal suffering and the personal glory of the great Head of Israel, he was also privileged more than any other among the Old Testament Prophets, in being caused to foreshadow (imperfectly indeed and partially), yet still to foreshadow in his own personal history the path of rejection and reproach, in which the King and the Redeemer of Israel was to walk, during the

days of His humiliation. On the other hand, there were also occasions (and they not few) when David was appointed to foreshadow the triumphs of the coming "King of nations," when Moab, and Edom, and Amalek, and all the rebellious strength of man, shall fall before Him, and "the earth tremble and be still." Many of David's triumphs were intended as types and earnests of that coming hour, and are so referred to in the Psalms.

But the favour with which God regarded David, and the honour which He placed upon him, was not displayed so much in the seasons of his triumphs as in the periods when for God's sake, hated alike by the Philistines and by the House of Israel under Saul, he became a fugitive in the land of God's people, and wandered up and down in the wilderness, finding even there no place of rest, no, not even in the despised cave of Adullam. When Moses, rejected by Israel and hated by the Egyptians, sought for refuge in the wilderness, he was allowed there to repose. The sword of the enemy followed him not. A hedge of defence was drawn around him and he rested peacefully. But it was otherwise with David. Though dwelling far away from the courts of Saul, and from the cities of Israel, and hiding himself in dens and caves of the earth, he was still "hunted like a partridge on the mountains," and had, again and again, to say, "They be many that fight against me, O thou Most High."

Great therefore, and peculiar was the honour

vouchsafed to David. Great grace was granted to him. Whilst walking in the power of this grace, and therefore elevated above the level of his natural condition, he was prospered. God worked in him: God sustained and guided him. But David was still a man—a poor, weak, sinful man. Through grace he could, and he did obey: but apart from grace, his tendencies were as the tendencies of other men: and he who was "the anointed of the God of Jacob," and "the sweet Psalmist of Israel" —"the man after God's own heart," could, even as others, disobey. By obedience he could guide (and often he *did* guide) Israel onward in paths of honour and blessing: by disobedience he could betray them into paths of disaster and ruin, and become to them a curse—not a blessing. Thus, he whose leadership at one moment foreshadowed the blessedness of that hour when the great Shepherd of Israel shall feed them "according to the integrity of his heart, and guide them by the skilfulness of his hand," may, the next moment, foreshadow the misery and woe of other periods, when Israel and the nations, led and ruled by lawlessness, are to be guided into paths of destruction and death. How great, therefore, the responsibility of governmental headship. If its power be put forth against God, it becomes the means of entailing on those who are guided by it, ruin and curse. Better not to be guided at all, than to be guided by the energies of evil; or indeed, by any of the contrivances of human thought. Governmental control is needed, but in order to be blessed,

it must be found in association with perfectness. It must be held and administered by a hand everlastingly holy, just, and good. This it is that man's need requires. God who gives the power, must also provide a hand suited to wield it—a hand that is not only Almighty, but is also as perfect in holiness as it is in strength. Men need to be under the absolute control of One perfect in goodness and in wisdom, as well as absolute and almighty in power. And such an One God has provided in Christ. Although having been by man despised, and by Israel "abhorred," [see Isaiah xlix.] He is now hidden in the heavens, yet that withdrawal is but for a season. Soon He shall return as "King of kings and Lord of lords." Soon on all that fear His name "shall he arise as the Sun of Righteousness with healing on his wings." "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." 2 Sam. xxii. 4. Then the earth shall be blessed and rejoice: then from the servants of Truth, sorrow and sighing shall flee away. They shall no longer be deemed as now, "the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things."

Once, and once only, was David as King of Israel permitted to rule them with wilful and disobedient hand, and so to bring them under the sore judgments of God. If one act of disobedience, a disobedience brief and soon repented of, caused Israel to be smitten so terribly, what will be the result to Israel and to

the nations, when they shall have voluntarily placed themselves under the leadership of one who shall not only disobey, but shall avowedly defy God, shall "think to change times and laws," "shall establish mischief as by a law," and shall say, and teach others to say, of Jehovah and of Christ, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us?"

The history of David's sin is thus given in the Scripture. "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Also in 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, we read, "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." These two statements are not, as some have imagined, irreconcileable with each other. God permitted Satan to tempt David: David was left to himself, yielded to the temptation, and sinned.

We are not told that David had done any thing to displease God before he yielded to the temptation by which he was tried. As to this, the Scripture is silent respecting David, and speaks only of Israel. "The anger of the Lord," it is said, "was moved against *Israel*." The fact, however, that David so readily yielded to the temptation of Satan, and so obstinately rejected the admonition of Joab, and others of his servants, seems to show that he had not been walking circumspectly, and with holy watchfulness before God.

It was a peculiar juncture in the history of Israel

and of David. The ancient foes of Israel and David, after centuries of conflict, had at last succumbed: Syria, Edom, Moab, Ammon, the Philistines, Amalek, and the children of Goliath of Gath, had been so crushed by the strength of David that they attempted no longer to struggle against him: they succumbed; were despoiled; and the gold which King David brought from all these nations he dedicated unto the Lord. See 1 Chron. xviii. 11, and xx. 4. This accordingly, was the period when David wrote the eighteenth Psalm — that wondrous Psalm whose words "David spake unto the Lord in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hands of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." See 2 Sam. xxii. 1. It is a Psalm true of David subordinately only and partially. He spake it prophetically. He spake it as one whose triumphs prefigured feebly the conquests of One greater than he, who shall finally come forth as Lord of lords, and King of kings, conquering and to conquer, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end. There was, however, a modified sense in which David could say, "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip. I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them; and turned not again until I had consumed them. * * * Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me. They looked, but there was none to save; even unto the Lord, but he answered them not. Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the

mire of the street, and did spread them abroad." It was a memorable epoch, therefore, in Israel's history when David spake unto the Lord the words of this Psalm.* Triumphs had been gained, and a rest attained, such as Israel had never before known. The sword was about to be sheathed; and the reign of Solomon, the Prince of Peace, was at hand. The Ark of God, ceasing from its lengthened wanderings, was no longer to dwell in curtains. The Temple was about to be built. Israel was to be gathered there in solemn and associated worship; and God's House was to be filled with His glory. It was a bright and blessed era; but it was only a type, a shadow. To those who regarded it with the eye of faith, and saw in it the foreshadowment of a yet distant future, it was an hour of holy encouragement and comfort—strengthening them towards God in patient endurance and hope: but it was a period that was capable also of being viewed *not* with the eye of faith. In that case it would become a snare.

When the feelings of nature predominate (and they always do predominate when faith is not in vigorous exercise) triumph or success, even when recognised as a gift of God's undeserved mercy, will, nevertheless, be so used as to exalt ourselves. As weeds flourish under sunshine and showers, so, when there is not watchfulness, the tendencies of our nature germinate under mercies. If foreshadowings and earnests of a coming rest are granted, such

* See this Psalm in its application to the Messiah of Israel considered in "Thoughts on parts of Isaiah," page 294.

earnests (unless there be watchfulness and faith) will be viewed not as earnests, but as realities, causing us so to anticipate the end, that we seek to rest, and to reign, before the proper time for resting and reigning is come. David may have fallen into this snare, and may have encouraged in himself habits of thought and feeling, utterly at variance with the truth of his and Israel's actual condition —utterly inconsistent too with the fact that all the prosperity that shone around him was typical, shadowy, and transitory. To number the people was but the natural act of one who had persuaded himself to regard Israel as having entered on a period of stable and permanent rest. As to the people over whom David ruled, *they*, for the most part, were not "of faith." "The sons of Belial" (as David owned with his dying lips) were strong and numerous in the midst of Israel, so that it was no wonder that the signal triumphs that had been vouchsafed, should have awakened in the hearts of such, a proud and self-sufficient arrogancy that had infected the rest of Israel, and called forth the sore displeasure of God.

Even among the true servants of God in Israel there were few, if any, who were prepared to form a right estimate of Israel's past history. They failed to apprehend aright the worthlessness of the foundation on which Israel were seeking to rear the fabric of their hoped-for blessing. God only, by His own unaided power, could rear it: and after His sovereign grace had reared it, the same grace

could alone give to them meetness to dwell therein. God must bestow: they receive. He must be the potter: they the clay. Such was the substance of the covenant of grace, which He made with Abraham when He said, "Blessing, I will bless thee:" and this Israel will recognise at last when the veil shall be taken from their heart, and they shall say, "Thou O Lord, has wrought all our works for us." לָנוּ Is. xxvi. 12. But as yet Israel have not understood God's methods of grace, nor apprehended their own need thereof. At Sinai they undertook to earn by the perfectness of their obedience to God, all the blessings which God in the covenant made with Abraham, had promised *freely to give*. At Sinai, Israel, so far as in them lay, abrogated the covenant of promise. For the covenant of grace, they substituted a covenant of works, and formally undertook to earn for themselves life by a meritorious obedience of their own.

God allowed them to place themselves under this covenant that they might be proved, and that their inability might be made manifest: but He did not on that account abrogate the covenant that He had made with Abraham (see Gal. iii. 17), or prove untrue to His promise and His oath. Whilst Israel, as a body, have been, year after year, earning for themselves misery and curse under their covenant of works, God on His part, has ever worked amongst them (sometimes silently, sometimes more manifestly) in the power of His covenant of grace. Throughout all the years of Israel's blindness, He

has ever had, and ever will have amongst them, "a remnant according to the election of grace." The sacrificial and ceremonial ordinances appended to the moral Law, whilst made (like the moral Law) tests of their obedience, were also memorials and pledges of that abiding grace which all the rebellion of Israel cannot destroy—grace which shall, in due time rend from the heart of Israel the veil that darkens it, and cause them to discern the true Sacrifice and the true Priest, and make them rejoice in His salvation. "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song: he also is become my salvation. * * * * * Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." (Is. xii.)

The sacrifices, the incense, the Priesthood, the atonement-money, were all memorials and typical pledges of blessings to come, which God *in grace* had promised, and therefore would not revoke. David should have considered these things. The very place that he was occupying as King of Israel was a typical place assigned to him under the Abrahamic covenant *of grace,* and held by him as an earnest of the coming of the true King of Israel who should in due time appear. David should have known that Israel, whilst their relation to Sinai

remained unchanged, could never rest otherwise than *typically*. No abiding rest, or strength, or blessing, could ever be theirs whilst as children of Hagar they drew their hopes from Sinai. Nor, when he looked on Israel, should David ever have thought of them as if they were *his* people whom he had a right to number as *his* inheritance and *his* strength. He should have thought of them as the congregation of Jehovah, Jehovah's inheritance, Jehovah's host, to be numbered only when Jehovah commanded: and more than all, he should have thought of them as Jehovah's *redeemed* inheritance—never to be numbered without a typical ransom for the soul of each being rendered unto God. "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. * * * * * And thou shalt take the atonement-money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls." (Ex. xxx. 12, 16.)

The very mention of the "atonement-money" (apart from the rendering of which Israel were never to be numbered) was sufficient to banish every feeling of pride or independency both from him who numbered, and from those who were numbered amongst the congregation of Jehovah, "for, accord-

ing to Jehovah's fear so is his wrath."* The very fact of being His congregation appointed to draw nigh to Him and serve Him in His holiness, must entail chastisement and plague on all numbered as His people, unless atonement interpose and provide a ransom for the soul. If David unbidden, and in unholy elation of heart presumed to number Israel as if there had been in them a strength that needed not to fear any chastisement, or dread any abasement, it is no wonder that the atonement-money should have been withheld. It seems to have been utterly forgotten. No mention is made thereof. All thought respecting the atonement-money appears to have departed from David's soul. He seems not to have recollected the words, "that there be no plague among them when thou numberest them." He appears not to have recognised the need of each one in Israel bringing severally the appointed half-shekel in token that he needed a ransom for his soul. Israel was numbered, as if they could forego that protection of grace which the atonement-money signified, and stand firm on the basis of that strength which in their recent triumphs had been so marvellously exhibited. Transgressing another ordinance of Israel,† they seem to have fed

* That is, the nearer we draw nigh to Jehovah to fear and to serve Him, the more do we supply occasions for His displeasure and wrath; for the higher and holier the service, the more does our natural sinful incompetency appear.

† See Gen. xxxii. 32. We are not to feed on the sinew of our own strength, even when we recognise that strength as being wholly the gift of God. We feed on nothing in our-

on the sinew of their own strength. Even Joab (whose eye was not very quick to see any thing according to God) discerned disobedience and danger in the step, and earnestly remonstrated. But he pleaded in vain. David was determined. In self-will he committed the sin, and entailed by it judgment on the people whom it was his privilege and his joy to guide with shepherd-care into right paths, and safe pastures. When the mind, instead of taking a comprehensive view of *all* the circumstances before it, persists in viewing them *partially* in some one favourite aspect, it is astonishing how blind it may become to things obvious as the day to every one who has no such bias to warp his judgment. David's soul, whilst absorbed in contemplating the might and triumphs of Israel, had no desire to consider other circumstances, the consideration of which would leave on the heart a sense of weakness—not of strength. David, therefore, advanced in the path that he had chosen, and sinned—grievously sinned. Yet his heart was not obdurate: his conscience was not hardened. It was sensitive, and quick to answer to the appeals of God. Accordingly, as soon as the prophet who was sent to him said, "Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue

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selves, but on something altogether external to ourselves. The altar and the shew-bread table supply us with our food, but *there* we find not the memorial of ourselves, but of another.

thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me." As soon as David heard these words, he neither hardened himself, nor murmured against God, but meekly said unto the Prophet, "I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." (2 Sam. xxiv. 13.) Accordingly the pestilence came. "The Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed."* David beheld the consequences of his deed, and was greatly bowed down. The words recorded in the historic narration of Samuel and of the Chronicles, sufficiently show the depth of his contrition. "And David's

* Or more correctly, "till the time of appointed assembly," that is, the time appointed for the meeting of Israel at the hour of the *evening sacrifice*. *Then* it was that God met David; then David worshipped in peace. Hengstenberg remarks as follows:—The calamity, according to 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, "lasted from morning till the time of *meeting*." That by this we are to understand, "the evening religious assembly," *i.e.*, "till the time of the evening sacrifice" (1 Kings xviii. 36, compared with verse 29; 2 Kings xvi. 15) is clear from the context. Of the two religious assemblies of the day, the first is excluded by the expression, "from the morning." The usual interpretation "till the time appointed," is inadmissible, for the phrase must mean some part of the day standing in opposition to the morning; and from the succeeding context, it is evident that the judgment did *not* last till the time appointed by God, but was shortened in consequence of David's repentance. Hengstenberg on the Psalms.

heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." (2 Sam. xxiv. 10.) "And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered; even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed? but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on my people, that they should be plagued." Yet strong as these expressions are, the depth of the anguish experienced is perhaps still more vividly described in the Psalm of thanksgiving which he afterwards wrote in commemoration of his deliverance out of this depth of sorrow,—

Jehovah my God,
I cried unto thee,
And thou didst heal me.
Jehovah, thou hast raised away from Hades my soul,
Thou hast preserved me alive from amongst the descenders to the pit.

* * * * * *

Thou didst hide thy face,
And I became a troubled one.

* * * * * *

What gain is there in my blood
In my descending to the pit ?
Shall dust praise thee ?
Shall it declare thy truth ?
Hear, O Jehovah, and be gracious unto me :
O Jehovah, be a helper unto me. Ps. xxx.

Thus David committed himself into the hand of God; and he committed himself not in vain. "God had sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it; and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough; stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan [Araunah] the Jebusite." See 2 Sam. xxiv. 16, and 1 Chron. xxi. 15.

The peaceful occupation of Araunah the Gentile (for he was a Jebusite) in quietly continuing to thresh his wheat on the floor of his own isolated garner *without* the walls of Jerusalem, stands in marked contrast with the troubled scene *within* the city, where David and the elders of Israel clothed in sackcloth fell upon their faces as they "saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem." Yet Araunah too was threatened; for the angel of the Lord drew nigh and stood over that peaceful threshing-floor, and the sons of Araunah saw him and fled, and hid themselves. Nevertheless, Araunah's threshing-floor the angel smote not, nor any who were therein. It was not to be a place of judgment: it was to be a place

of forgiveness, and peace, and grace. David was commanded to go thither, and there he found forgiveness, and there he worshipped. And where was Araunah's threshing-floor? It was on Mount Moriah. This was the mountain (as its name indicates) where Jehovah appeared as Jehovah-jireh to Abraham; and where, true to that covenant name, He appeared to meet and to provide for the need of David. Could then Moriah cease to be the mountain of grace? Could Moriah ever become the mountain of judgment to David, or to any of God's believing people?

Moriah was the mountain to which Abraham went when commanded to offer up Isaac his son.* Confiding implicitly in God, even when he understood

* In Gen. xxii. 14, we read, "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said to this day, in the mountain of Jehovah he shall be seen," *i.e.*, seen as the provider; or as some render it [see Gesenius and Wright], "in the mountain of Jehovah it shall be provided," *i.e.*, provision shall be made. The sense is the same whichever rendering be adopted.

"Moriah," a name derived from the same root, signifies the place of appearance, *i.e.*, of the appearance of Jehovah as the provider. Hence in 2 Chron. iii. 1, we read, "Then Solomon began to build the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem in mount Moriah [the mountain of *appearance*] where there was appearance [*i.e.*, appearance of Jehovah] unto David his father, in the place David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite." בְּהַר הַמֹּרִיָּה אֲשֶׁר נִרְאָה לְדָוִד

It should be observed that all the thoughts connected with Moriah and the provision thereon made, are to be traced back to the words of Abraham in Gen. xxii. 8, "my son, God will provide for himself [יִרְאֶה־לּוֹ] a lamb for a burnt offering."

not the reason of His commands, Abraham was guided to Moriah, in order that he might there give full proof of his faith and of his obedience—faith and obedience being the two great endowments which God's grace had specially bestowed on Abraham. But God had not called His servant to Moriah, merely that Abraham might there be honoured by manifesting the steadfastness of his faith, and the unhesitating unreservedness of his obedience. This trial of Abraham was to be made the occasion of unfolding to Abraham, and through him to us, a knowledge of God's ways in grace, greater far than any that Abraham had ever yet attained. Abraham was not only commanded to give up his son to death, but he was also charged himself to slay him; and for three days the weight of the anticipated sorrow was allowed to rest on Abraham's soul. Here was a sore and prolonged trial of Abraham's faith. Yet God intended not that Abraham should know the anguish of actually giving to his son the fatal blow. The altar was prepared; Isaac was bound; the knife was ready; and the hand of Abraham was stretched out to take it, but God interposed, and the knife was sheathed. Abraham was spared the agony of giving the fatal blow. But when the hour should at last come for God to give up the Son of His own bosom whom He loved with a love compared with which Abraham's love to Isaac was but as nothing—when that hour should come, God intended not either to spare Himself, or to spare His Son. Had Isaac died, his death would have been

comparatively painless; the time would have been short; the struggle little. But God was about to appoint His Son—the Son of His bosom—to a prolonged life of reproach and aggravated grief: and His life of sorrow was to be followed by a lingering death of agony by crucifixion—agony which although intense was as nothing to the unseen agony which He was to endure whilst He drank the cup of veritable wrath—the cup of wrath which (because of the claims of God's governmental holiness, founded on His own essential hatred of sin) it was necessary that the Redeemer should drink, if Abraham, or Isaac, or we, were to be saved. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him, and to put him to grief." His soul was made "an offering for sin." Faith, therefore, looking back to Moriah, accepts the lesson it teaches, and says, "He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all [all believers], how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."

But this was not the only lesson taught on Moriah. Can we gaze on Isaac bound with the cords, the fire kindled, and the knife prepared—can we think of him thus, without being reminded of a condition that pertained unto him, and pertains unto us as sinners? God demands perfectness: we have none. He demands that there should be no sin, no transgression found either in us or in our ways: but transgression and sin are the unvarying characteristics of our condition as men. We deserve, therefore, to be bound with the cords of judicial death

and to be consigned for ever to the fire that never shall be quenched. And this must have been our doom, if God, as Jehovah-jireh, had not intervened, and provided a victim to be substituted in our room. In Isaac, therefore, unbound and restored to the joyful liberty of life, (a victim having been by God provided to bear in his room the stroke of death, and leaving as the result of that death the sweet savour of its own acceptableness to rest on the head of Isaac for ever) — in Isaac thus restored, we are taught on Moriah another lesson. We learn the blessedness of the redeemed, as having had appointed for them a substituted victim, through whose atoning death God has provided eternal reconciliation.

Deep must have been the joy of Abraham, when, relieved of his anguish, he found himself in the presence of God, honoured because of the stedfastness of his faith, strengthened by increased acquaintance with the methods of God's grace, and comforted by the renewed assurance of future mercies. Yet, Abraham, although through God's grace obedient and for his obedience honoured, was, nevertheless, not perfect. His course was not faultless. One dark thread of mistrustfulness, leading to deceit and falsehood had been interwoven from the beginning with his history. See Gen. xii. 11, and xx. 13. In the history of Hezekiah afterwards, we read that God left him for a season to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart. So was it with Abraham. He too was to be allowed to supply practical attestation to the truth, that "in the flesh

there dwelleth no good thing." Abraham therefore, even as others, *deserved* the fire and the knife of judgment, and consequently needed like all his brethren, to be shrouded by the sweet savour of a burnt-offering altar, supplied with its sacrifice by the provision of God. How far a consciousness of this need was present to Abraham's heart when he uttered the words, "Jehovah-jireh," we cannot say. We may be very sure that he has learned to appreciate these words now, and will prove the blessedness of them in eternity for ever. In leaving Moriah, he left it as one honoured, instructed, comforted. He approached it in stedfastness of obedience; he left it in stedfastness of joy.

Far different were the circumstances that marked the path of David as he approached Moriah. He came there, not because, like Abraham, he had been obeying God; he came there as one whom disobedience had encompassed with sorrow, judgment, and death. He came clothed in sackcloth; bowed down not merely by anguish, but by anguish caused by the consciousness of the guilt of his transgression. He came because he saw the sword of the angel of the Lord drawn against him and his people. He came as a "troubled one," Ps. xxx.; as one who needed to be saved from being "amongst the descenders to the pit." Ps. xxx. Abraham was afflicted, but how different was the sorrow of the consciously-obedient Abraham from the sorrow of the consciously-guilty David?

Nevertheless, David found on Moriah the same

God that had there met Abraham, a God whose compassion failed not. Not in vain had "Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh [Jehovah will provide]: as it is said to this day, In the mountain of Jehovah provision shall be." God had there provided for Abraham. There also God provided for David. The same grace that could provide a substitute for Isaac, could provide a substitute for David. The same grace that had placed Abraham and Isaac under the acceptableness of a sacrifice of sweet smelling savour, could place the same protection and the same acceptableness upon the guilty head of David. And this God did. The sweet-smelling savour of accepted sacrifice again ascended from Moriah. "David built there an altar unto the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the Lord; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering." 1 Chron. xxi. 26. When David met God David was in sackcloth: but God met His servant in pardoning mercy, not in judgment, and David could say, "Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and clothed me with gladness. Weeping had sojourned for the night, but exultation had come in the morning."

However great the joy that accompanies the steps of conscious obedience, it falls short of that joy which hearts repentant and contrite feel when, after having been chastened and ploughed as it were, by anguish, they meet God as David met Him on Moriah — to receive unmerited forgiveness, and not

forgiveness merely, but blessing also. Moriah was to David a place of peace, but it was not a place of peace only, it was likewise a place of honour and of blessing; for *there* David built an altar and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings; *there* the Lord answered him by fire from heaven; *there* he was commissioned (not indeed to build but) to prepare for the building of God's House, and to say, "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel." 1 Chron. xxii. 1: and for the dedication of that House he was caused to write that Psalm of mingled confession and praise to which I have before referred. Surely there can be no joy so deep as the joy of one who, after having as a servant of the Lord failed (it may be grievously) is brought back chastened, humbled, and contrite, to receive not only forgiveness, but also the honour of being again allowed to serve that God whom, and whose service his soul loveth. Glory too vast, too transcendant for our hearts at present to conceive, will surround the saints of God when the hour of their final triumph will have come. Out of the midst of that cloud of glory, the dwelling place of the redeemed, the voice of praise and of thanksgiving will issue, and heaven as it listens will recognise in it a depth and a fulness such as it never heard before. It will be the praise and the thanksgiving of redeemed sinners, fully conscious of that *from* which they have been delivered, fully conscious of that *whereunto* they have been brought, —darkness, woe, sin, judgment past; light, joy, holi-

ness, honour come. Hence the words with which the Psalm to which I have referred, concludes.

Thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,
That so GLORY may sing praise to thee, and not be silent;
O Jehovah, my God, I will give thanks to thee for ever.

Mercy like that shown unto David in delivering him "from amongst those that go down into the pit," in putting off his sackcloth and girding him with gladness, — mercy like unto this, shall finally make GLORY vocal with the voice of ceaseless thanksgiving; for GLORY shall be the home, the dwelling place of redeemed, rescued, delivered sinners — men who will have proved to an extent and in a fulness that David knew not, these very mercies, which, when in the way of foreshadowment only they met him, caused him to say, "O Jehovah, my God, I will give thanks to thee for ever." Therefore "GLORY" shall be the home, the dwelling place of praise. It shall not be dumb. It shall give thanks unto God for ever.

Moriah, the mountain where the Lord appeared as the One that discerned and provided for the need of His people, was henceforth to be the place of the Lord's House. There Jehovah was to dwell as the Dispenser of blessings established in the power of sacrifice. There He was to make Himself known to His people. There He was to be consulted: there worshipped. Up to this time Moriah had been *without* the gates of Jerusalem. Neglected (might I not say despised?) by Israel and by Jerusalem, it

had become the possession of Araunah a Gentile,—but a Gentile who feared and worshipped the Jehovah of Israel. On Moriah, Araunah the Jebusite, surrounded by sheaves gathered from the land of Israel, was peacefully threshing the stores of his garner, whilst terror, judgment and death, were overspreading Jerusalem. But when David and the elders of Israel came humbly in sackcloth to Moriah and found there forgiveness and peace, the type changed. Moriah was to be no longer a place forgotten and outcast. It was to be incorporated into Jerusalem: it was to be linked to Zion, the citadel of strength. The Temple of the Lord was to be reared there, and Israel's burnt-offering altar was to be placed there. But all this was typical and transitory. Law, not grace, was the foundation on which it stood. The Hagar-covenant of works, not the Sarah-covenant of promise, was still Israel's hope. Therefore all has vanished: and although the antitypical blessing prefigured and pledged by the sacrifice on Moriah, has come (for the one oblation has been once and for ever offered), yet both it, and the acceptance, and peace that flow therefrom have been by Israel despised, and have, like the typical Moriah, become the inheritance of the Araunahs that may be found among the Gentiles. Many indeed among the Gentiles profess to be as Araunah. But they are not. They may recognise the grace of Moriah in word: but they recognise it only to pervert, or to betray. There are few Araunahs. Nevertheless, there is, and there

shall be to the end, a remnant who prize the grace provided on Moriah, and who, in the power of that grace, worship — who gather into their garners sheaves reaped from the fields of Israel, and peacefully on Moriah thresh out and feed on that which they have gathered. And when the closing hour of Israel's unregenerate history shall have come, and when Satan shall have raised up over Israel a head of wickedness, who, moulding and directing all their energies, shall bring them into direct conflict with God, and when God's destroying glory shall appear, there shall, at that hour, be still some on earth who, like Araunah abiding in his garner on Moriah, shall stand unmoved and unharmed though heaven and earth tremble. The place of Moriah-grace, which the Araunahs of earth will have solitarily occupied, will begin to be recognised in all its preciousness by the spared remnant of Israel there, and will become the place of their joy, their worship, and of their glory. Israel and Jerusalem, clothed in sackcloth, shall (to use typical language) appreciate and own the value of the threshing-floor on Moriah in that day: in other words, they shall apprehend the preciousness of that grace which God has twice manifested on Moriah, and they shall bow down and worship. "Then peace shall flow down to them as a river: glory shall dwell in Emanuel's land, and the ends of the earth shall see God's salvation." The sons of Belial, whom David could not quell, shall be crushed for ever then. The true King of Israel shall have come to reign as Jehovah of

Hosts in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously,—heaven being His Throne; the earth His footstool, and Jerusalem the city of the great King. Israel shall again be numbered then by their rightful Lord and possessor. "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her, and the highest himself shall establish her. Jehovah shall count when he writeth up the people that this man was born there." Ps. lxxxvii. 5. The atonement money will not be forgotten then. The perfectness and the preciousness of the one oblation once offered will in that day be fully recognised; for the true Melchisedek, the *Priest*-King, will have come forth, accompanied by all the results of His accomplished sacrifice. The desire of the heart of David the King will be fully satisfied then. The sorrow that sojourned during the night, and the joy and exultation of the morning without clouds will have come. Such will be the result of the sorrows of that day which shall cause repentant Israel to find their resting place, and to rear the altar of their worship on the threshing-floor on Moriah, which they have abandoned to the Gentile stranger. The coming therefore, of David, clothed in sackcloth, to the threshing-floor of Araunah on Moriah, is an event, the record of which stands forth in the midst of the earth's present darkness and woe, as a lamp kindled of God to illumine the eye of faith during this night of sorrow, and shedding upon the now not distant future, a light and a radiancy of joy, triumph and glory that shall never again wane.

NOTES ON PSALM XXX.

THE title of this Psalm should be translated thus: "A Psalm. A song of dedication of THE HOUSE —[a Psalm] of David."

The ordinary translation, by connecting the words, "*of David*" with "*House*," instead of with "*Psalm*," has given rise to the false notion that this Psalm has reference to the King's own indwelling; whereas "the house" as an absolute phrase, can only mean the House of God. *Alexander on Psalms.* See also *Hengstenberg and De Burgh.*

The words of David, 1 Chron. xxii. 1, are sufficient to determine the question. "Then David said, This is the house of the Lord God, [referring to Araunah's threshing-floor] and this the altar of the burnt offering for Israel."

The Psalm may be literally translated thus:—

I. I will extol thee, O Jehovah;
For thou hast drawn me up [as from a pit]
And hast not caused my foes to rejoice in respect of me.

Thou hast drawn me up] As from a deep well or pit. See דלה thus used in Ex. ii. 16, and Prov. xx. 5. David had consciously experienced what it was to be cast down as into a deep, dark, and terrible pit: but he was drawn out of it by the faithful

hand of his Heavenly Friend. Experimental realization of the joy of deliverance contrasted with intensity of previous anguish is the characteristic of this Psalm.

My foes] Satan, evil spirits, and Satan's servants among men—these are the foes, all ready to rejoice at the sorrows, disasters, and chastisements, of those who serve and fear God. When the children of God stumble, then it is that "the foes" rejoice and magnify themselves.

II. Jehovah, my God,
I cried unto thee,
And thou healedst me.

III. Jehovah, thou hast raised away from Hades my soul,
Thou hast kept me alive from amongst the goers down to the pit.

The intensity of David's sufferings are vividly pourtrayed in these verses. His clothing outwardly was sackcloth; but this was but a feeble expression of the depth of his inward suffering. The King of Israel, he whose distinctive place it was to uphold the ordinances of the God of Israel, had himself violated those ordinances, and had caused Israel to violate them likewise — and that too, whilst he and Israel were professing to serve God according to the principles revealed at Sinai. David, therefore, was caused in no ordinary degree to feel and to own the chastening hand of God. But David was not as Saul. He was truly "*of faith*," and therefore was one of Abraham's children according to the Spirit.

Consequently, the grace of the Abrahamic covenant, which the Law could not disannul, intervened on his behalf, and David was delivered from going down into the pit. The realization of the danger and woe, contrasted with the realization of the joy and security unto which he was rescued, gives to this Psalm its character. Such will be the realization of the redeemed when they enter into their glory.

IV. Sing unto Jehovah, ye his saints,
And give thanks in commemoration of his holiness.
V. For a moment is [spent] in his anger;
Life in his favour:
At evening time may come as a sojourner, WEEPING,
But in the morning there is SHOUTING.

The contrasts in this passage should be noted. Anger, favour. A moment, everlasting life. Evening, when weeping enters to *sojourn*; morning when joy cometh to *abide*.

VI. But I had said in my security,
I shall not be moved for ever.
VII. Jehovah, in thy good pleasure
Thou hast made to stand for my mountain, STRENGTH.

This verse discloses the secret of David's fall. Although he had not forgotten God, and had not ascribed his triumphs to the strength of his own hand, but had ascribed them to the favour of God, he nevertheless thought that God had in His good pleasure, brought him to a mountain of abiding strength — strength never to be overthrown. He felt, therefore, as one who had reached a city of

habitation whence he might look back upon insecurity, and toil, and conflict, as things that had passed away. He had mistaken type for reality; shadow for substance. He had failed to appreciate the difference between Hagar and Sarah; Sinai and Zion.

Thou didst hide thy face,
And I became a troubled one.

A troubled one] בהל, here used in the Niphal participle, is a strong word to denote the confusion and amazement caused by terror or calamity. See Ex. xv. 15. "Then the dukes of Edom shall be *amazed*" —i.e. from terror. See also 1 Sam. xxviii. 21; "And the woman [the witch of Endor] came unto Saul and saw that he was sore *troubled*." And Job iv. 5; "But now it is come upon thee and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art *troubled*." It is a word which indicates a condition of feeling the very reverse of that which had caused him to say, "Thou, O Jehovah, hast made to stand for my mountain *strength*."

VIII. Unto thee, O Jehovah, will I call,
And unto Jehovah will I supplicate.

IX. What gain [is there] in my blood?
In my descending to the pit?
Shall there praise thee DUST?
Shall *it* tell forth thy truth?

X. Hear, O Jehovah, and be gracious unto me;
O Jehovah, be a helper unto me.

We read on another occasion, at Ziklag, when David was greatly distressed, for the people spake

of stoning him, that "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." 1 Sam. xxx. 6. So likewise here. He sought for refuge to God; and God's faithfulness failed him not. He asked God to be gracious unto him, and He was gracious. He asked that God would be a strength unto him, and he was strengthened. The sorrow that had sojourned with him as for a night, passed: and joy entered, that was to remain.

XI. Thou hast turned my lament into a dance for me;
Thou hast loosed my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

XII. In order that GLORY may sing Psalms to thee,
And not be silent.
O Jehovah my God,
I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

With thoughts like these shall the saints enter into their glory — and all because of SACRIFICE. "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." Very precious, therefore, is the lesson that faith learns at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

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