

THE LIFE OF FAITH

ITS NATURE AND POWER

AS ILLUSTRATED IN HEBREWS XI

BY

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"CHRIST AND THE SCRIPTURES," ETC.

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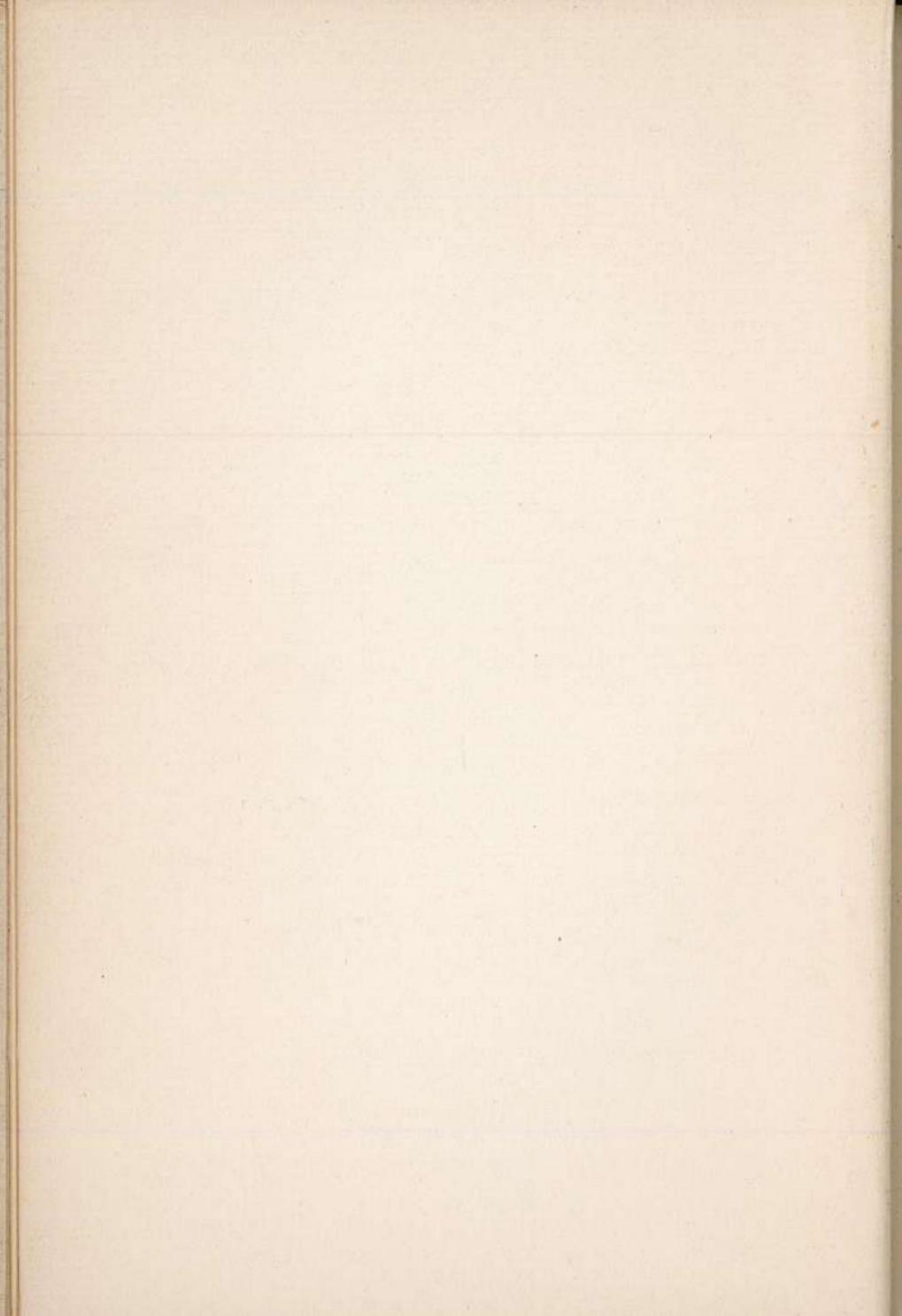


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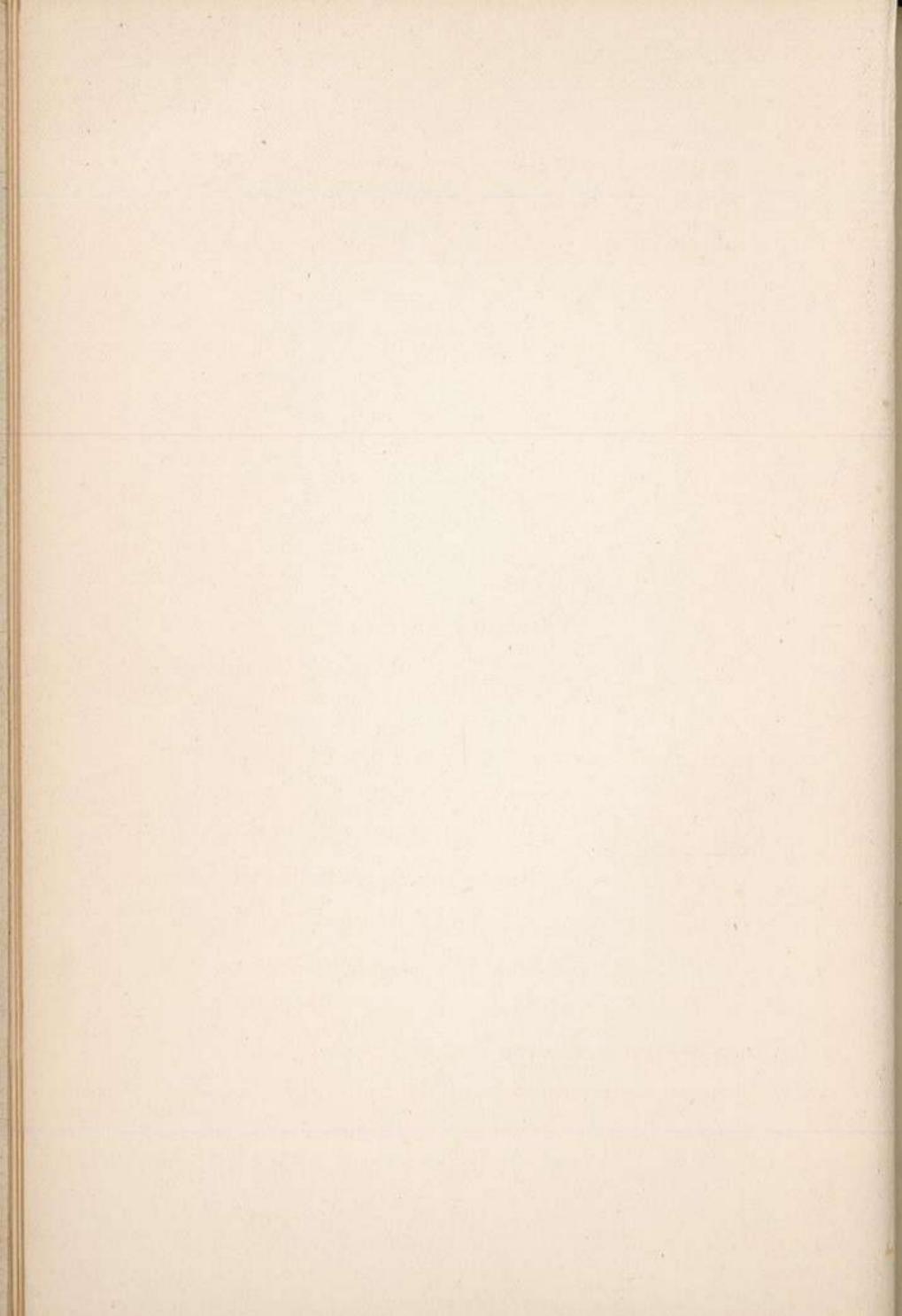
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THE LIFE OF FAITH.

CHAPTER I.

Faith and things hoped for and unseen.

HE pre-eminence of faith is kept in view throughout the whole epistle to the Hebrews, which the writer himself describes as a word of exhortation. For this purpose the apostle unfolds the glory of the Lord Jesus as the great Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary, that the Hebrews may continue in the faith, considering the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, drawing near in full confidence to the throne of grace, realizing the true, substantial blessings of

the new covenant, and waiting for the promised return of their Lord. Unbelief was the reason why the Jews, with whom God was grieved, could not enter into rest; if we believe not, as Isaiah had testified, we cannot be established. The apostle warned the Hebrews by the most solemn and awful arguments from their own Scriptures against unbelief. But as he exhorts them most earnestly, so he hopes also in the exercise of deep affection that they belong not to them who draw back unto perdition, but that they are of the true disciples who believe to the saving of the soul.

Live then by faith; for only by faith is it possible for the just to live. The things hoped for and the things not seen, which are now made manifest in full perfection by the gospel of Christ, can only be realised by faith, even as it was by faith that all the godly, since the beginning of the world, lived and suffered, obeyed and conquered. In order to encourage, stimulate, and comfort them in the midst of trial and temptation, he brings before them in rapid but most vivid and com-

prehensive sketches the history of the fathers, whom they regarded with the profoundest reverence and affection, showing them that theirs also was the life of faith. What was their greatness, but that they were men of God ? and what made them men of God, but that they believed God, and waited for the fulfilment of His promise ? Faith was the characteristic feature of all the saints. It is the attitude of heart, without which there is no communion with God, and without which we cannot please Him. The apostle gives therefore the most comprehensive definition of faith, describing the radical and essential disposition of heart Godwards, in whatever dispensation men lived, both before the first advent and in the Church period. It consists at all times in a firm confidence of unseen and future realities.

There are things hoped for in the future, in eternity ; there are things not seen, both past and present. The latter expression is more comprehensive than the former. The second advent, our resurrection and glory, are future things hoped for ;

God, as the creator and upholder of all things, and all spiritual truths and heavenly realities, belong to the unseen, of which faith alone can have assurance. The heart of man, although since the fall gravitating towards the things which are seen and which are present, is never satisfied with the visible and temporary, but cannot rest except in the spiritual and eternal. God of His great mercy hath revealed unto us the things of God; eternal and spiritual realities have been manifested by God's Spirit. There is a divine revelation; the things which man's reason cannot discern or his imagination and intuition discover, have been unveiled. God revealed Himself, He spoke unto the fathers, and His revelation contained always a promise of future and never-ending blessings, as well as a manifestation of present spiritual and heavenly realities. The victory of the seed of the woman over the serpent was a future thing, the object of hope; the manifestation of Jehovah's holy love, combining mercy with judgment, was the manifestation of a present, though unseen,

spiritual reality. The promise of the seed, in whom all nations are to be blessed, was a future thing; the assurance, "I am thy God, walk before Me," revealed a present unseen but much real blessedness. Now all communion with God was based upon the divine revelation of things hoped for, and things not seen.

How is this revelation received? What is the eye that sees, the organ that beholds and appropriates this gift? Faith is the eye that beholds the King in His beauty, and that sees the land that is afar off. Not man's intellect, not man's imagination, not man's conscience; all these become indeed most deeply, radically, and thoroughly the servants of faith; but that which discerns and beholds spiritual realities and appropriates them, that which beholds future blessings, and so grasps and cherishes them as to prefer them to things visible, and to make them the object and joy of life, is what Scripture calls *faith*.

Now faith appears at first sight a very simple

thing; it is nothing else but receiving the Word of God. We know what it is to receive the word of a man, to believe statements, though strange and surpassing our experience, because we regard the character of him who makes them with respect and confidence. Faith in God's word is receiving God's testimony. But then, remember, as God is greater than man, as God's word is heaven-high above any human word, so the reception of this Word, the believing of this Word, is necessarily something quite different from the reception of any human word or testimony. As is the voice, so is the echo; as is the seal, so is the impression; as is the word, or revelation, so is the faith. The divine Word produces in the heart of man faith, which is divine in its nature and power. When God speaks, when God discloses to the soul the world of spiritual realities and of future blessings, this very word of His creates within the soul a new world of fear, shame, contrition, desire, reverence, longing, hope, trust, which no other word could call forth, perfectly unique in its

character, as God's word is unique in its character. To assent to the Word of God is therefore to enter into a perfectly new life, a perfectly new mode and power of existence. Nothing but God's word could ever have called forth that which we call faith, and God's word, Spirit-given as it is, only when vitalized by the same Holy Ghost. Where then is the seat of faith? Not in the intellect, which sees the logical connection or the historic evidence; not in the imagination, which recognizes the beauty and organic symmetry, and reproduces the picture; not in the conscience, which testifies to the righteousness and truth of the revelation; but in a something which lies deeper than these, in which all these centre, and to which all these return. With the *heart*, as the Scripture teacheth, man believeth. There, whence are the issues of life, emotional, intellectual, moral, spiritual, in that secret place to which God alone has access, God's word, as a seed, begets faith; God's word, as a light, kindles light, and the *man* becomes a *believer*. Believer describes the whole

man. This is the characteristic and the power of the new life—we believe in God.

See then how mistaken those are who fancy faith to consist in the mere assent of the understanding to doctrines and facts, seen to be true on sufficiently evidenced authority. See how no man can give faith to another; how the mere reception by reason, or sentiment, or fancy, of clear and pathetic statements of gospel truth is not faith. Without desiring the things future, without turning in sorrow and self-condemnation to the unseen God—revealed without the heart clinging in trustfulness to God the Saviour—there is no faith. God speaks to the heart of Jerusalem, and faith is the heart hearing and responding.

In this faith, called forth by the Word of God, and brought forth by the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is from its very birth and commencement an element of certainty, conviction, light, which transcends the certainty of the senses or of the intellect. Human argumentations deal generally with words, abstractions, vessels of mere formal

conceptions. God's Spirit reveals to us the *things* of God, and the things of God which are given to us; so that from the river which flows into our heart and lives, according to the promise of Jesus, we know with perfect certainty the eternal fountain of divine love, and the infinite ocean of endless blessedness, towards which we hasten. Where in the whole realm of thought and feeling is there anything to compare with the Christian's "I am persuaded that nothing can separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus"? Hence he who believes says, I know; or he says, I believe, and am sure, that thou art the Christ. When God speaks to the soul, and the soul, giving up its own judgment and thoughts, receives in humility the testimony of God, faith stands in the power of God. The Spirit demonstrates, that is, shows as realities the things of God. Faith is the evidence, the clear and all-sufficient demonstration,* of things

* The apostle uses here a term which occurred in his day often in philosophy; the more so as the thing itself is wanting in all human metaphysics, proof, evidence, or demonstration

not seen ; and it is an assured confidence in the fulfilment of things hoped for; so much so that the *power* and *comfort* of the future is even now realised, though it doth not yet appear what we shall be : faith stedfastly anticipates the fulfilment and possesses the substance.* Do not look upon

which meets all objections and admits no doubt. Philosophy has no such demonstration of things invisible and unknown ; it cannot give such certainty ; the divine testimony brings with it such inward conviction ; faith resting on divine testimony possesses such certainty.—MENKEN, *Homilien über Heb. xi.*

Human reasoning loves to give itself the appearance of perfect originality, and every new metaphysical system appears with some degree of assumption of having arisen out of the depths of a human mind and of being built up by necessary laws of thought. Perhaps nothing so fascinates and entangles young minds as this promise, “Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.” Hamann refers to this when he asks : Is your whole human reasoning anything else but tradition ? and does it require much to trace the succession of your bare and twice dead opinions to the root of your genealogical tree ?

* The expression *ὑπόβασις*, substance, is used (1) in the sense of essence (Heb. i. 3), and (2) in the sense of confidence. (Heb. iii. 14 ; also 2 Cor. ix. 4 ; xi. 17.) Taken in the latter

assurance of faith, as it is called, as a subsequent addition to the original faith which first grasps the promise; all faith, and be it but as a grain of mustard seed, possesses the God-given certainty, trust, conviction, light. "O God, Thou art my God; I will put my trust in Thee."

Thus all the children of God lived by faith. They knew God's character; they believed His mighty works in creation; they rejoiced in His presence; they realised the future blessings He

sense, the meaning of the passage would be, that faith is a standing, confiding expectation of future things, which as future are objects of hope. But the expression seems also to suggest the other aspect of faith, as realizing and possessing, even in the present, the blessings and powers of the future. The expression *λεγχος* teaches that faith itself is to the believer a sure argument of the reality of those things which cannot be seen, or which cannot otherwise be discerned. An interesting passage is quoted by Delitzsch from Dante, *Paradise*, xxiv. on faith, a paraphrase of Heb. xi. 1. His words, in reply to the question how he obtained faith, are also memorable: "The flood, I answered, from the Spirit of God rained down upon the ancient bond and new. Here is the reasoning that convinceth me so feelingly; each argument beside seems blunt and forceless in comparison."

promised. Israel beheld God, the invisible, and they waited for the Messiah. This was their whole life. This is the explanation of their self-denial, courage, patience. Though the present and actual condition was full of reproach and suffering, yet they knew God was theirs, and the future glory and inheritance remained secure. What shall we say of our father Abraham, and of his children? What else but that they were *believers*, receiving the promises by faith, even as by faith they realised the ever-present Jehovah? And just as the first mention of priesthood in Scripture is not in connection with the Levitical successional priesthood, but with Melchisedec, type of the Son of God, the true, real, personal Priest, so the word "righteousness," it occurs for the first time in the book of Genesis, as the apostle Paul notices exultingly, not in connection with law and works, but with grace and faith. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness, and this golden sentence shines forth again in the pregnant declaration of the prophet Habakkuk, "The just

shall live by faith ;" and again in the fulness of the Pentecostal light Habakkuk's word is illumined in the epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, and in our chapter, where the whole Old Testament history is described as the history of men who lived by faith, confidently expecting things hoped for, and fully assured of the reality of things unseen.

But if the glory of the old covenant was great, much greater is the glory of the new dispensation. Greater and better things were reserved for us. Israel's future was the advent of Messiah, the descent of Jehovah—the coming of their king David, to give glory to Israel and light to the Gentiles ; and Israel's unseen things were the salvation truths manifested in type and prophecy, in God's words and dealings. But contrast with this our position. Our future, though comprehending Israel's, contains new and peculiar elements. Messiah's first advent is past. Accomplished is His exodus at Jerusalem,* finished His work in

* Luke ix. 31.

Golgotha ; as Son of man He is now enthroned at the Father's right hand ; and we expect Him now to return to receive His bride, that we may be glorified together with Him. To us it is said, "Go ye forth to meet the Bridegroom ;" to us it is announced, "This same Jesus shall so come again in the clouds of heaven." Now that the incarnation and the death and ascension of the Son of God have been accomplished, how much brighter is our hope ! how much clearer and more blessed are the things hoped for, and the things not seen ! For if, like Stephen, dead to the world and filled with the love of Christ, we look steadfastly towards heaven, we see the glory of God, and Jesus at the right hand of the Father. This was the great object of our epistle, to reveal the things not seen, the glory and grace of the heavenly sanctuary. The throne of grace, the blood of Christ, the intercession of the Saviour, the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, are the things unseen ; Christ's coming again, and we manifest with Him in glory, things hoped for.

It is clear why in this epistle the apostle gives such a general and comprehensive view of faith. The question of justification and sanctification is not before him. Christ the Priest, heaven the holy of holies, believers for ever perfected in Jesus, this is the all-important point towards which all his arguments tend ; hence *faith*, and faith in its most general or root-sense, as beholding unseen and future things, is the great and constant theme of his exhortation.

We also need the faith explained in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, to be deepened and quickened as well as tested by the faith explained in this epistle. The sinner, first brought to a knowledge of his guilt and misery, beholds the Lamb of God ; through faith in His blood he is justified and filled with joy and peace, and this by the power of the Holy Ghost. This is indeed the very centre of faith, and that to our very last breath. But if we are really to continue in communion with God, to obey and to suffer, to work and to conquer, we must learn also the circum-

ference of faith, beholding the things which are unseen and eternal: through Jesus we believe in God, we have our citizenship in heaven.

Faith is what Jesus sought in Israel; and when the Son of man cometh again He asks, Shall He find *faith* on the earth? How often did Jesus say, "Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee!" Only believe! is His word of consolation as well as rebuke. And how harmonious is the testimony of the apostles. Peter cannot leave Jesus, because he believes and is sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; faith in the name of Jesus was what he preached in Jerusalem. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins," is his message when he opens the door to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. Faith was also the result of his preaching, as he writes, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

In like manner John, the beloved disciple. Not

even the apostle Paul gave a fuller and deeper testimony to the pre-eminence of faith. True, he was called to point out the relation between faith and works, law and gospel, the dispensation of Moses, and the dispensation of the Spirit, and hence for teaching and convincing men, the Jews the self-righteous, the natural man in general, we must always go to the Pauline epistles. But the nature, essence, power, and victory of faith are nowhere described with such clearness and energy as in the writings of John. Let me remind you of a few of his golden words: "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Faith is here represented as the gift of God, inseparably connected with the new birth and divine Sonship. Think again of the many declarations in his gospel in which the Lord connects faith with the (present and imme-

diate) possession of eternal life.* Then again the indwelling of God in us and our indwelling in God, and the witness of the Spirit, are connected with faith.† Again, if we believe in Jesus, the Lord says, rivers of living water shall flow out of us, or the Spirit of God shall be given to us abundantly, so that, filled with the Holy Ghost, our words, influence, and works will be like fertilizing streams. And in like manner, if we believe, we shall do the same works which Christ did, and greater works, because the glorified Son of man is now with the Father.‡ Again, faith is described as the victory which overcometh the world.

We see that Scripture speaks thus of faith in a very deep and comprehensive manner, and that it is indeed a wonderful, mysterious, powerful grace given of God. Inseparably connected with eternal life, the indwelling of God, the witness of the Spirit, the victory over the world, and the imitation of Christ. Such a view may at first discourage

* John iii. 16, v. 24, xi. 25. † 1 John iv. 15, v. 10.

‡ John vii. 38; xiv. 12.

anxious and seeking souls. Let them remember that it is their need and guilt, and nothing else, to which the words of the Lord Jesus and His call are addressed.

Have we faith? We say, We need a stronger degree of faith. Yet Jesus says, when the disciples ask Him to increase their faith, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye should say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and it should be done."* We say that we have weak faith, because we are yet babes in knowledge, and have discovered yet little of the treasures of divine revelation; but Jesus says, "Have faith in God."† The most elementary truth is sufficient. Realize God's power and love. We need not so much deeper knowledge, as faith in the simplest truths. We say that we have not the faith of some of God's eminent servants, yet Jesus says, "*Whosoever*" (not merely an apostle or prophet) "shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall

* Luke xvii. 6.

† Mark xi. 22.

not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass ; he shall have whatsoever he saith."* But let us remember for our comfort the great distinction between a dead or vain faith, and weak or little faith. The Lord rebukes the fearfulness and doubting of sincere disciples, yet He rebukes also the storm, and delivers His people from all their fears.† True faith takes hold of the divine Word ; it is weak or strong, great or small, as it receives, keeps, and uses the Word of God. Abraham staggered not at the word of promise through unbelief, though it was a word most difficult, nay, impossible, for reason to receive, and thus Abraham was strong in faith. The source of weak faith is in the ignorance and slowness of the heart in reference to the divine testimony. The strength of faith is the humility of a helpless and broken heart cleaving to the promise. Worm Jacob becomes Israel ; and a poor Syrophenician woman is transplanted "from the utmost corner of the land"

* Mark xi. 23.

† Matt. viii. 24; xiv. 31.

to the foremost place by the Master's word, "O woman, great is thy faith!"

There was one who, next to the apostles, was perhaps the greatest gift of God to the Church, whom we all admire for his faith. And yet Martin Luther was wont to say, "Oh, if I had faith! If I could only believe that God is the Creator! If I could only say in faith, Our Father!" And often he confessed, that unless every day he read the Scriptures, and meditated on Christ, and repeated the Creed, and prayed the Psalms, his heart became dead and cold, full of dark and hard thoughts of God, and of dreary and tormenting doubts and fears. Let us dwell then on Christ; let us consider Him in stedfast, diligent, frequent meditation; let the Word of Christ dwell richly in our hearts, minds, and homes. Let us connect the world of unseen and future realities with our walk and conduct, with our daily duties and trials. Let the life which we now live *in the flesh*—our present earthly life, with its work and trouble—be a life of faith. Things hoped for, Jerusalem the golden, and the

constant presence of the Prince ; things not seen, the throne of God and the great High Priest, the spiritual blessings in heavenly places—think of these things in your hearts, and with full purpose of will, all ye who sit by Babel's streams, with your harps on the willows ; and though strangers and pilgrims, you will be able to sing the song of faith, you will go on from strength to strength.





CHAPTER II.

Faith in God the Creator.

“**N**OW abideth faith, hope, love, these three.” The apostle Paul has described the nature and power of these three fundamental, abiding, and inseparable gifts of grace in three chapters, which shine forth as bright stars in the firmament of Scripture.

Writing to the Corinthians, who were enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge, but who stood in danger of departing from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus, and of falling into discord and lukewarmness, he showed the more excellent way by describing the pre-eminence, characteristics, and eternity of *love* in a hymn which proceeded

from his inmost experience,* and which contains a portraiture of his own individuality.†

Again in the epistle to the Romans (chap. viii.), after having shown the position of the believer justified before God, and separated from sin by the death of Christ, he shows how, in the midst of afflictions, and in the conflict with sin and the flesh, the believer is upheld by *hope*; from the high tower of hope, resting upon the sure foundation of faith, he beholds the manifestation of the sons of God, the redemption of our body, the regeneration of the whole creation, and he is persuaded that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. And in our chapter the same apostle brings before us the power of *faith* in a series of examples, which comprise the whole history of revelation from the beginning to the first advent. This wonderful exposition of the most fundamental of the fundamental graces stands before our eyes and

* Notice the form of this chapter in the first person.

† 1 Cor. xiii.

hearts like a triumphal arch commemorating the beauty and the victory of faith. Faith, hope, love; these three inseparable gifts of the grace of God are brought before us continually in Scripture, and the simplest experience of the Christian recognizes their connection, as well as their relative position.

Faith comes first ; for only when we believe the love of God, wherewith He loved us, we love Him and the brethren in Him. Only when we trust in Jesus we hope to see Him again. God speaks, God gives, the grace of God brings to us salvation. Since God begins, faith must needs be our beginning. "Salvation is of the Lord ;" this itself implies the pre-eminence of faith. Jesus is the Christ; this itself implies that only by trusting in Him can we be brought nigh to God. We have seen how the apostle John, who dwells so fully on the love of God towards us and the God-given love of believers towards God, points out the root-nature of faith. For this purpose was his gospel written, that we may believe, and believing, have eternal life, and know that we have life. For this purpose

were his epistles written, that we who believe may live and walk in love ; for God is love. And for this purpose was the book of Revelation given by the Lord Jesus to the apostle, that believing and loving we may hope for the Bridegroom's advent, to receive us unto Himself. Blessed is he who, believing in Jesus, can say, "Father;" who, loving the Father and the brethren, can say, "Our Father;" who, hoping for the inheritance above, can say, "Our Father, which art in heaven."

Things unseen are not doubtful to faith ; but faith is the evidence, the clear and sure beholding of the things of God, shown or demonstrated by the Holy Ghost. Things future are not vague and shadowy, for faith gives them substance ; so that they influence, gladden, and uphold us in our earthly life. Not as the world giveth gives God unto us. Our faith is not a pale and uncertain light ; it is not inferior to the knowledge of reason, or memory, or the senses ; it is light, conviction, substance. We have the things we believe, and which God has freely given to us.

Now in illustrating the power of faith, the apostle begins with Abel and ends with the Maccabees. Israel's history commences, strictly speaking, with Abraham; but as Israel was chosen in Christ, and for the salvation of all nations, so the beginning of Israel's history is, more strictly speaking, from the very first believer in the Messiah. Jesus says, "Before Abraham was, I am;" and thus we may say, Before Abraham was, were Abraham's children, the seed of faith; so that the father of the faithful will rejoice, not merely over all the Gentiles who believe in the promised and now manifested Redeemer, but shall behold Abel and Enoch and Noah, and all the saints of the pre-Abrahamic period, numbered among his children. Yet the distinctness, and the peculiar position of Israel in the kingdom, remains an undoubted fact revealed in Scripture.

We may wonder why the list of believers does not commence with Adam. But the reason is obvious. Scripture is inspired, both in its narrative and in its silence. Moses does not mention

Adam's faith in the promise, and his return to the favour and love of God. He implies it; and the reason of his not stating it fully is, because throughout the whole Scripture Adam is brought before us, not as an individual, but as the representative, the federal head of humanity, in whom we stood, in whom we fell, through whose disobedience sin and death came upon all. This is the sad but fundamental truth which we are to remember in connection with Adam. From him we are to look to Christ, the incarnate Son of God, as to the second Adam, our Righteousness and our Life. We have no doubt that Adam and Eve believed to the saving of their souls. But Adam's typical and federal character is so important that all other aspects are thrown into the shade.

But the apostle may have another reason. We inherit from Adam unbelief, distrust of God's Word, suspicion of His kind and loving purposes, the tendency to ask, Is it so? when God says it is so; and to say, I will not go, when God commands to go. The Father, the author of faith, is not

Adam, but the Lord Jesus. Hence is it more appropriate and instructive to begin the series of believers not with Adam. And yet, as faith in God the Creator is mentioned before Abel's faith, there seems an allusion to Adam before the fall. As the Creator, God revealed Himself to our first parents. All knowledge possessed by creatures of creation is necessarily by *faith* in God's revelation. The very angels, who rejoiced when they beheld the six days' work, were not witnesses of the first creation of heaven and earth, since they themselves were called out of non-existence into being. They also by *faith* understand that God created all things.

And this declaration of the apostle, as it remains true in every period of history, is more especially important in our day.

Reason *cannot* ascend from nature to nature's God. The most comprehensive observation of things seen (that is phenomena), of which we can take cognizance, and the most minute analysis of things to the most remote and simple elements,

leave the question of creation or the origin of things perfectly untouched and unapproached. The step from matter to mind, from things which appear to that which is the cause, spring, origin of all, is one which reason cannot take. God reveals it; we believe.

Ancient mythologies and philosophy, as well as modern science and speculation, cannot rise to the conception of the original, free, and infinite cause of all things. It cannot get beyond some primeval material substratum of elementary atoms, and by tracing developments from a lower to a higher form of existence, only removes by millions and billions of years the question which lies dormant in every child's mind: Who made all things?

Scripture announces in sublime simplicity: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* Every house is built by some one; but He that built all things is God.† By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were

* Gen. i, 1.

† Heb. iv. 24.

not made of things which do appear; that the visible world did not arise out of phenomenal matter. God created by His Word (as we read ten times, "And God said") all things, from the highest to the lowest. He created in the beginning, and all things which have a beginning form the world or creature. To conceive of the world as without beginning is to deify it; for in and before the beginning is only God, the Father, the Word, or the Son, or the Eternal Wisdom,* and the Holy Ghost.† God created all things for His glory; the self-manifestation of God in the redeemed Church of which Christ is Head is the purpose which He purposed in Himself.

The fundamental truth of creation is unfolded in Scripture with increasing light and fulness, and as our insight into the counsel of God is enlarged, our faith takes firmer and deeper hold of this primary revelation of God's sovereignty, life, goodness, wisdom, power, and love. The doctrines of

* John i. 1; Col. i. 18; Rev. iii. 14; Prov. viii. 14.

† Gen. i. 2.

the Trinity, of man's relation to God, to angels, to the world, of redemption, of the first and second advent, of the future glory, are all most intimately connected with the doctrine of creation; so that here is not only the first lesson which we teach our children, but the ultimate and highest theme of adoration.* The apostle declares in our passage that the very first statement of Scripture history can only be grasped by faith. By faith we understand,† not merely that Cod created the world, but that He created the world by His word;‡ for as we read in Genesis, every new species was called into existence by the creative Word of God. And this view, which faith receives, it receives in order to *exclude* § the hypothesis into which all attempts

* Rev. iv. 11.

† *νοοῦμεν* (compare Matt. xv. 17) to understand the reason and method.

‡ The apostle uses the expression *ρήματι*, which of course is a different expression from the personal *λόγος*. But what else can be the meaning of him who, in this same epistle (i. 3), declared that God made the worlds by His Son? Though the apostle Paul does not use the word *λόγος*, he teaches the same truth as John (i. 3) in his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians.

§ *εἰστὸ μῆ.*

of reason to account for the origin of the world resolve themselves ; viz., the things visible developed out of things phenomena.

By faith, through revelation, we understand this. It is not by our own reason or observation that we ascend to this knowledge. It is one of those "things not seen," for the perception of which faith only is the organ, and the evidence of which is only the testimony of God apprehended by a believing mind.

Even Christians take erroneous and superficial views of this fact. They say, only a fool can deny that the world must have had a Creator. They think that the beautiful design-argument must occur to every rational mind, and have force with every rational mind. If we look at a watch and its ingenious mechanism, we never doubt that an intelligent mind contrived and a skilful hand executed the design. Can this universe, in its marvellous and stupendous structure, and with its complicated and harmonious laws, be the result of chance, or its own cause ?

Now this argument is very forcible to those whom Scripture has taught that God created. No heathen mind ascends thus from things seen to the infinite, self-existent Creator. We, whom revelation has lifted to the height of faith, are able to reach down arguments like ladders to those in the valley; but not by such ladders did we ourselves ascend. By *faith*, and through God's word, God is known as Creator.

God did not leave man to find Him from creation, to infer His existence from His works.* He revealed Himself, and men, knowing God, did not glorify Him as God, neither were thankful. Thus from their original knowledge of God, they by their own sin fell into idolatry; and one of the

* Compare my remarks on the necessity of the Spirit's revelation in "Christ Crucified. Lectures on 1 Cor. ii." As Pascal observed: "Scripture assures us, that in every instance, when the beauty of creation manifests its Author, it is not from the simple contemplation of natural objects, but owing to a divine illumination, which disposes the heart aright." We speak of man's unassisted reason, but it never was unassisted. The expression is correct only in a relative and limited sense. There is not merely the action of the Holy

great results of this apostasy is the ignorance of man, of the most refined and gifted nations, of the most subtle and powerful intellects, of God as the Creator of the world.

Now it may be said there are many people who do not believe in the Scriptures or in Jesus, and who yet believe that God created the world. To this my answer is twofold. First, Where did they obtain this knowledge? Reason often adopts the teachings of Scripture, and then, like a conjuror, pretends to have brought them out without assistance, and out of an empty receptacle. All the philosophy of man could never have written the first verse of Genesis. But reason and science will ultimately acknowledge the first chapter of Genesis to be a perfect revelation of truth.

Ghost on the heart and conscience, there are not merely the traces of our original condition, but there was the primeval revelation, which left distinct marks in the traditions of antiquity. (p. 105.)

Hamann says: "To my mind, 'natural religion' is a perfect nonentity, the same as natural (self-originated) language. Unbelief is the oldest and strongest, and, next to superstition, the only 'natural religion.'"

But my second answer is more important, though sad. What is this belief worth, this rational, intellectual belief, that God is the Creator—a belief independent of Scripture, and independent of the God of salvation revealed in Christ Jesus? Soon—thus the history of human thought shows us—this belief vanishes, either before the lofty and alluring speculations of Pantheism, or the powerful and fascinating science of materialism.

We find it difficult to look from earth, from things visible, from second causes, to heaven, to spiritual and eternal realities, to the Lord, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. And as civilization advances, as men who have not the love of God in their hearts become more fully acquainted with the laws of nature, the tendency to materialism becomes stronger ; and, resting satisfied with the phenomenal and the secondary causes and powers, men fail to rise above the inanimate and visible unto the Fatherly heart in heaven, whose omnipotent love and wisdom day by day, hour by hour, cherishes, rules, and sustains all things.

Let me remind you of Israel's, of the Christian's or Church-faith. For as the Israelite believed in God, and waited for the advent of Messiah, so the Christian believes in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe that God is; for He has spoken to us, He has loved us, He has redeemed us. He was Abraham's guest and guide, his sure portion, and exceeding great reward. He brought Israel out of Egypt. He spoke unto the fathers as unto His chosen friends. Jehovah reveals to us, that He is the Lord, the Creator of heaven and of earth; that He made all things by the word of His power. He shows us His works; He points out their vastness, their grandeur, their beauty, their joyousness. He bids us lift up our eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things. When we murmur against Him, and question the wisdom of His impenetrable dealings, He asks us, like Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted

for joy?" We adore in humility, we behold God's sovereignty, and we say, It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth good in His sight. He shows us His wisdom, His power, His goodness in creation. When we are tempted to trust in the creature, to swerve from obedience to God's command, and to be anxious about the future, He explains to us creation—the heavens above; the sun, with its genial and joyous light; the mountains and rocks in their strength; the beneficent rain and snow which come down to earth; the mysterious seed, which brings forth fruit, as symbols of His own grace, love, faithfulness, of spiritual realities given to His people. He reveals to us that all things were made by His Son, and for Him, who is appointed Heir of all things; that not atoms, or an original matter, but Christ, is the beginning of creation, in whom all His counsels stood before Him from all eternity. And He assures us that He will make "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

And Israel responds: "My help cometh from

the Lord, which made heaven and earth." And the Church responds: "I believe in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of heaven and earth." Israel responds: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." And the Church confesses: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by Him."

Israel replies: "What have I to do any more with idols?" "Cursed is he who trusteth in the arm of flesh." And the Church replies, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. . . . The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Israel says: "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory;" "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more." The Church says: "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, and to take to Himself the

kingdom, and we shall reign with Him." Israel knows the Creator of heaven and earth as the giver of the new life, of repentance, and faith. "Turn me, and I shall be turned;" "Create in me a pure heart;" "Breathe, O Spirit, upon these slain." The Church says: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth, that we might be the first-fruits of His creatures."

God is the Creator; this is the first note struck on the lyre of Revelation, with which all other strains are in harmony. It sounds throughout the whole anthem. In Christ we hear the full melody. In Him we behold both the eternal counsel of redemption, and the final consummation in glory.

He who made all things by His word has by the self-same word created us anew unto eternal glory. His promises, His sayings, are *creative*

words, spirit and life. That same Almighty Father, by Christ and through the Spirit, will make new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. God is the Creator; with Him all things are possible. He calleth unto non-existent things, and they are; He doeth all in Christ, and for His glory.

Such are the apparently simple but inexhaustible and ever-blessed revelation-truths for the sinner seeking salvation, for the Christian in affliction, in temptation; for the day of warfare, the night of sorrow, the hour of death.

God is the Creator. We say to every human being: You are not your own; Christ is the Head of every man; return unto the Lord. Glorify God with your body and Spirit, which are His.

And if he says, "I cannot," we answer: God is the Creator. With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. He can create a new heart, and put His Spirit within you. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

And to the doubting, afflicted, perplexed be-

liever we say: God is the Creator. "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding." And again: "Behold the fowls of the air. Consider the lilies of the field. Are ye not much better than they?" "Shall not God much more feed and clothe you, O ye of little faith?" And again, God has made and upheld all things great and small. The very hairs of your head are numbered. He that made the heart, shall He not know all its fears and its sorrows? Commit the keeping of your souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

And to the backslider, the lukewarm and world-loving, we say: Hast thou forgotten God, the Creator? and trustest and lovest and seekest

thou the creature more than the Lord, putting thy trust and delight in uncertain riches? To the Laodicean, Christ speaks, as the beginning of the creation of God.

And to the dying, in his faintness, we say: God is the Creator; and we know that if this our earthly tent be taken to pieces, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Now may the eternal and the omnipotent, the faithful and all-wise Creator, who by the precious blood of Christ His Son has redeemed us, and by the power of the Holy Ghost through the Word has renewed us and grafted us into the living Vine, keep us through faith unto the glory and reward of the inheritance at the appearing of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."



CHAPTER III.

Abel, Enoch, Noah.

ISRAEL was pre-eminently to be an historical people.* They were always exhorted to remember and to consider their history. It was their solemn duty to cherish the memory of the past. The remembrance of the wonderful dealings of God was to be perpetuated from generation to generation. The

* The difference in this respect between Israel and the other nations of antiquity is very marked. Bunsen says, "Historical writing was born in Israel." Niebuhr remarks "that the Old Testament is the only exception to the general patriotic untruthfulness of the other nations. It never disguises or passes over the reverses of the people of which it treats. Its truthfulness is the highest in historical literature. . . . The Old Testament is also the most accurate of all historical sources." It should be added that the Old Testa-

Jewish nation lived in the remembrance of its early history. The annual festivals, the constantly-recurring sabbath-days, the very names of God, kept the fundamental facts of their marvellous history before their minds, and impressed them on their hearts. The children were encouraged to ask questions both in reference to memorial services and to memorial stones and institutions.* "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."† The whole book of Deuteronomy is a review of the past. Many psalms contain a synopsis of

ment not merely records faithfully all calamities and defeats which Israel had to suffer, but where is there a record which narrates and censures the national sins with such unsparing severity, which is thoroughly free from national conceit and self-righteousness, which lays the axe at the root of all pride and self-exaltation? I do not know any history except this one which announces on every page, We are a stiff-necked and rebellious people; and it is only owing to divine mercy and long-suffering that we are preserved.

* Exod. xii. 26; Gen. xviii. 19; Josh. iv. 6, 7.

† Deut. xxxii. 7.

Jewish history from the days of Abraham to the election of David, whom the Lord took from the sheep-folds, and made king over Israel. Such psalms are either didactic in form, and inscribed *Maschil*, or lyrical songs of praise, extolling the ever-enduring mercy of the Lord. All the prophets were filled with a vivid and constant consciousness of Israel's past history. In their addresses to the people, and in their communion with God, the memory of Jehovah's past dealings with Israel is ever with them.* Take for instance the sublime prayer of Daniel.† He refers to the books of Moses and the prophecy of Jeremiah; but how full of life and concrete reality is the Scripture to him! He is himself in the current of divine history. Here all is of God, and supernatural; and yet here all is perfect liberty, and out of the inmost depths of the heart gush forth the confessions and ardent, importunate petitions of the loving patriot.

To remember the past, and to wait for the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,

* Josh. xxiii. xxiv.; 1 Sam. xii. 6. † Dan. ix.

was the attitude of God's children; thus Malachi concludes by pointing back to God's servant Moses on mount Horeb, and by pointing forwards to Elijah preparing the advent of Jehovah. For this is Israel's peculiarity, that the past is connected with a great and glorious future; that memory and hope dwell together in unity; that the older days are viewed not with regret but with the joyous anticipation of a coming era, fulfilling all the promise given in the morning of their history.

It is natural that this historical character of the Jewish mind should manifest itself most fully during a period of transition and crisis. The advent of the Lord was the turning-point in Israel's history. Hence the gospel of Matthew begins with a genealogical summary of Jewish history from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonish captivity, and from the exile to Mary, the mother of our Lord. Hence the historical character of the songs of Zechariah, of Mary, and of aged Simeon. After the death and

resurrection of the Lord, the Jewish nation was still further tested by having the gospel preached unto them. And as the future development of Israel depended upon their acceptance or rejection of the divine message, we notice in the apostolic preaching always a reference to their past history and a solemn declaration that Israel had now arrived at the most important and awful crisis. The apostles recapitulated the past history of Israel, and showed the coming, the death, and resurrection of Jesus to be the culminating events of the dealings of God with the chosen nation. All the addresses of the apostles Peter and Paul, recorded in the book of Acts, are historical and not doctrinal. The living God, who had brought Israel up to this point, was now sending the gospel of His Son Jesus to bless them, in turning away every one of them from his iniquities.*

* It is difficult for us fully to realize the historical and national character of the apostolic preaching to Israel. In the new covenant dispensation our thoughts are directed chiefly to truth in its eternal aspect. We meditate on the love of God, the grace of the Saviour, the indwelling of the

The apostles called upon the nation to believe in Him of whom all their prophets had testified, in whom the covenant was made with Abraham, and who was now in heaven waiting for the restitution of all things. It was the burning question of the day; the turning-point in Israel's history. Hence we can understand the speech of Stephen. In the face of death, and beholding by faith the glory of God, so that even to his enemies his countenance appeared irradiated by a heavenly beauty, Stephen addresses the rulers of the nation; and in this most solemn moment, and in the plenitude of the spirit, what is his address? *He surveys the Jewish history.* Calmly, deliberately, and with great fulness, he narrates the story of Abraham's call, and of Joseph's sufferings and exaltation, and

Spirit, on the soul's relation to Christ, and on our union with Him in the coming glory. This is right, and yet there is a danger of substituting an abstract and doctrinal method for the concrete and historical method of Scripture, according to which the remembrance of Jesus, and the expectation of His return and kingdom, form the main elements of Christian teaching and life.

of the youth of Moses, his flight into Midian, and of Israel's exodus and wanderings in the wilderness, and of David and Solomon. This is not the place to explain his selection of events and characters and the scope of his address ; the only point of importance is the fact that Stephen at such a time dwelt on the past history of Israel ; he speaks not of doctrines, but of history, facts, and the past dealings of God with the nation. How strong, how vivid, how ever-present must that past have been to the believers of the apostolic age !

In our chapter the past history of Israel is brought before us in a similar manner. The universal character of God's chosen people, and of the Scripture which records their history, is seen in many ways ; and perhaps the most obvious is the fact, that as its prophecy comprehends all nations, so its history begins not with Abraham, but with Noah and with Adam ; thus showing from the outset that it is a revelation for mankind, and of the dealings of God with man, and

concerning the whole race. It is on account of this connection of Israel with the whole race that Jesus charges Jerusalem with all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias.* And as the genealogy of our blessed Lord is traced not merely to Abraham, but to Adam, so is the history of Abraham's seed traced to the pre-Abrahamic believers.†

In this remarkable history, extending over so many centuries, there is a wonderful unity. It records God's dealings with man: and as God is unchangeable, and the human heart the same in

* Matt. xxiii. 35.

† This portion of the book of Genesis must have appeared in a new light to the Jews, as the gospel in its universal character and world-wide application became dear to them. The references of our Lord to this section of the Word are very numerous; to the institution of marriage in Paradise, to Cain and Abel, to Noah, to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, to Lot's wife. Again the patriarchal history appeared in a new light to the apostle Paul, as the history of our fathers, before the law came as a parenthesis and schoolmaster.

every age, this history speaks to all times and nations ; it is the most human history, as well as the most divine. This peculiarity of Scripture has been acknowledged by poets and philosophers ; it has been felt by all nations and ages. There is no history, there are no characters with which the world has become so familiar, which have so wrought themselves into the very consciousness and heart of mankind.

But the Christian regards this characteristic from a higher point. "To the spiritually-minded, time and place are not. The Word of God is therefore, when spiritually apprehended, no history of successive generations having reference to various countries and divers persons. It becomes a living whole—a picture of the dealings of God with man ; of the great contest between good and evil ; of the victory over evil by men in whom Christ dwells, and who hold communion with God."

Before the flood and the Abrahamic covenant God had a people on earth who lived by faith.

Abel the first martyr, Enoch the seventh from Adam, and Noah the preacher of righteousness, are the three witnesses of this period whose lives are recorded. In Abel we behold faith's accepted sacrifice and worship; in Enoch faith's walk and triumphant ascension; in Noah faith's reverent, persevering obedience and testimony. It is only with reference to this central grace of faith that we have here to consider these three characters.

The first believer who is brought before us in this gallery of God's saints is Abel, the shepherd, beloved of God; but hated without cause for righteousness' sake by his brother. He is a type of the Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, whom His brethren hated, because—and not merely, although—there was no guile in Him. Jesus calls him "righteous Abel," and speaks of him as the first martyr, whose blood was shed in witness of God's truth. There is no figure in sacred Scripture so vividly impressed on our imagination from childhood. On the threshold of history we behold this silent, believing martyr. There is scarcely any

incident here of man's doing, and yet it is full of instruction, full of testimony glorifying God. He brought a sacrifice, he worshipped, he was accepted, he died, and this by faith.

He was the first of the human family who tasted death. Fallen in Adam, he died ; through Cain's sin he suffered death ; but through faith in the sin-offering he overcame death. The first man, who had to descend into the grave, was carried through it on the arms of redeeming love. The first son of Adam, who had to experience the divine sentence pronounced against sin, was to angels, and, may I say, to the Son of God Himself, a type of the great sacrifice of divine love to be fulfilled in the appointed time. Faith from the first rested in the Lamb of God. Between the revelation of God, the Creator, to Adam, and the first witness and example of faith, Abel, lies a catastrophe, a change, important, mysterious, and awful, which we can never understand, though in the sweet light of revelation we can now think of it without despair. It is the fall of man, the entrance of sin and death into the

world of man. Hence man cannot approach, worship, love and serve God without sacrifice. The Creator, the paternal and bountiful Lord, is also the Governor and Lawgiver; in holiness is His reign, and in justice and truth stands His kingdom. God Himself provided the remedy, and revealed the mediation. The eternal thought of the Three-One, love manifested in mercy through a Substitute, was declared to man before he was banished from Paradise. God gave the promise. God also gave the type of righteousness through the Substitute's death, when He clothed our fallen and guilty parents. The Lord covered them with the robe of righteousness. Abel, believing the word, approached God through the better sacrifice. In the book of Genesis we are simply told the facts, that "Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Here we have the explanation of the fact. What caused Abel to bring his offering? what else but faith? He believed that God is the Creator, the Lord, the source of all life and blessing;

and how could he believe it without desiring to be in communion with Him? He believed that God is holy, that man is sinful and guilty; how then could he dare to come before God, or to appear with his sins, and with his imperfect and sin-stained gifts and works? He believed that God is love, gracious, and merciful, and that through sacrifice, through the suffering of a Redeemer yet to come, through the substitution of an innocent and pure life for his own forfeited one, God the just would justify and accept the guilty. Because he believed he brought the appointed sacrifice. Behold, the sacrifice is accepted, and Abel is declared righteous—righteous according to God's estimate, according to the perfection of that Sacrifice, of which Abel beheld only the symbol.*

* When it is so frequently asserted that the reason why Abel's sacrifice was accepted was solely because it was offered in faith, it seems to be forgotten that faith consisted in the very fact that Abel offered *the God-appointed sacrifice*, and thereby showed his humility as a sinner, and his trust in divine mercy as a believer. The object of the apostle here is, however, not to teach the doctrine of expiation, but the character of faith.

Every one who believes in Jesus Christ, is an accepted worshipper. There is *no other* true and spiritual worship but the worship of a believer in Jesus, and this worship is *always* accepted. Let us therefore not speak doubtfully, whether God will accept our "poor prayers." We believe that God cannot accept us as we are in ourselves, for He cannot acquit the guilty nor accept anything except perfection; but if we believe in Jesus, God accepts us in Him. His blood was shed for the remission of our sins. By His offering He has perfected us for ever. Of this, the only worship, Abel though dead yet speaketh. And of this also, that though God loves us dearly in His own Son, yet sufferings and affliction may be our portion. We who accept the sacrifice must be willing to become a sacrifice, and to know the fellowship of His sufferings.

The sinner, who through faith in the sacrifice is righteous before God, belongs now to God, and is an heir of eternal life. Sin and death have no more dominion over him. Thus Enoch, the seventh from Adam, walks with God. In this simple familiar

expression, we have the description of the new life. It brings before us communion with God, dependence on His guidance, submission to His authority, confidence in His love and favour, continuous, habitual fellowship, and a mind conformed to God's mind, and delighting itself in the Lord. How can two walk together except they be agreed? God was Enoch's constant and loving companion, Lord, and strength. Enoch pleased God, and why? Because he trusted Him. He trusted Him as a *reality*, believing that He is, and as a faithful and loving God, the rewarder of all who diligently seek Him. Enoch walked with God *only*; for as his own prophecy, preserved to us by the Spirit in the epistle of Jude, shows, ungodliness was the characteristic of his age, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed." Living in an age of ungodliness, of violent and defiant unbelief, Enoch not merely kept himself unspotted from the world, and communed

with the Most High, but he was a bold and intrepid confessor, and declared the future things which he apprehended by faith. The contemplative and spiritually-minded believer is also a witness. The life which is hid in God must manifest itself also in conflict with the world. The disciple who rests on the bosom of Jesus is afterwards banished for his testimony. No doubt Enoch had to experience the opposition and hatred of an unbelieving age. As a lily among thorns, so was Enoch among the children of men; God regarded him with delight, because he lived by faith.

The constant repetition of the words, "and he died," in the fifth chapter of Genesis, is very striking. Although the duration of human life was still exceedingly long, as if the forfeited blessing of immortality was reluctantly leaving mankind, yet it is evident that, through the disobedience of one, death passed upon all men. But to show that the believer is not under the dominion of death, God took Enoch away and translated him into the eternal, peaceful region.

"He was not ; for God took Him." His life was short compared with those of his cotemporaries, and this must have rendered his translation the more remarkable. Without seeing death he passed to the immortal state. Enoch and Elijah are types of the ascension of our Lord, an illustration of the truth, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Thus shall it be when Christ comes ; they who are living by faith at a time of which Christ says, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ?" they shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, transfigured in their bodies, glorified and beatified in a "moment, in the twinkling of an eye." And we all, who believe, belong no more to death. Christ has destroyed, that is, rendered powerless to us-ward, him who had the power of death, that is, Satan ; Christ has taken away the sting of death ; dying we do not see or taste death, but we see and taste Jesus, the life of our life, our eternal life.

Abel testifies of faith's sacrifice and worship, always accepted. Enoch of faith's walk and

triumph, lifted above sin and death into fellowship with the holy God, the Lord of life. Noah's faith has again another testimony. He found grace—first time the word is used in Scripture—in the eyes of the Lord. The judgment of the flood was announced to him. Moved with fear—not the fear of terror, but the fear of reverence, of humility, and of trembling astonishment, both at the impending judgment and condescending mercy of God, he obeyed and built the ark. The element of true repentance was in that fear, as it must always be in faith; for Noah was a sinner, and in believing the judgment of God he acknowledged also his own unworthiness and guilt. Only a deep sense of sin could have acknowledged the justice and believed the approach of judgment. His faith, rooted in the contrite heart, and evidenced in his daily work and obedience, was tested by the opposition and mockery of the world, to whom he testified of sin, of judgment, of saving grace; declaring what he possessed himself, righteousness by faith. And

by his faith he not merely saved himself, but also his household.

Abel, Enoch, Noah, are a threefold type both of Christ and of the believer. Jesus is the righteous One, Shepherd and Lamb, the Martyr, true and faithful Witness. He is put to death because He was holy, and His brethren were wicked. But Jesus, who died, is like Enoch, who after his walk with God is taken up to heavenly regions. He liveth now to God. And Jesus is like Noah, who saves the household, so that the punitive judgment on sinners does not reach them; but they dwell safely in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty.

If we possess Abel's faith in the Lamb of God, then the history of our life and death can be summed up as Abel's—a sinner, who worshipped, who was accepted, who entered heaven through faith in the blood of the atonement. If God permits us to continue our life on earth, we walk with God—our light, our strength, our law, our consolation, and our joy. Walking with Him, we

please Him, notwithstanding all our sinfulness and errors; our citizenship is in heaven; we belong to the realm of light, and when Christ comes we shall be taken by divine power, and delivered in a moment from earth's trials and the bondage of mortality. And, like Noah, looking forward to the fulfilment of the prophetic word, and possessing ourselves the righteousness which is by faith, we testify and call to the world: Flee from the wrath to come.





CHAPTER IV.

The Patriarchs.

WITH the election of Abraham commences a new period in the history of revelation. Hitherto God's dealings had been with mankind as one family ; but after the destruction of the tower of Babel, mankind was divided into languages and nations. That tower was the expression of a deep-seated apostasy, a type of the God-defying infidelity which in the last days shall rise against the Lord and His anointed. Judgment was sent, and, as we notice in all God's dealings, judgment according to His infinite wisdom preparing greater manifestations of redeeming love.

The origin of nations, apparently coincident with the beginning of idolatry, is the occasion of the election of Abraham, to be the father of a divinely-given nation, which was to be the witness of God and the channel of His revelation. And the other nations, though for a season left in ignorance, are reserved, to be brought by Jesus the Son of Abraham unto the knowledge of God, and the unity of peace.

Since mankind is now divided into nations, salvation is ultimately to be brought to mankind by a nation. Hence the restoration of humanity, which we yet await, shall be through the medium of Israel. The promises shall be fulfilled, when all nations of the earth, with Israel, and round Israel as a centre, fear the Lord, and confess Him with one accord in unity of spirit.*

This chosen nation must needs have a peculiar origin and character. It is to show forth God's praise; it is to bring to fallen, helpless, guilty

* Compare my Lecture on Heathenism in "Christ and the Church: the Apostolic Commission."

humanity God's salvation. Now, as Christ the Saviour, though true man, must come from above, as He is God-given and conceived by the Holy Ghost, though born of the Virgin Mary, so Israel, the nation, must likewise have a supernatural character. As Jesus among men, so Israel among nations—He a real and a true man, yet God's Son; they a real nation, with a true human history and development, but different from all other nations in the manner in which God by direct interference originates them, forms them, and gives them His guidance.

The election of Abraham and the birth of Isaac show at once the supernatural character of Israel's history. Their history throughout is an embodiment of the principle, "Salvation is of God." It illustrates the contrasts of divine omnipotence, and the utter weakness of nature; the promise of grace, and the utter inadequacy of the present actual condition; heavenly treasure in earthen vessels, worm Jacob, God-conquering Israel. Abraham, nearly a hundred years old, and childless, is to be

the father of a multitude like the stars of heaven ; the dwellers in tents, who have to purchase a burial-place for Sara, the inheritors of the land ; nay, heirs of the world. Such from the beginning was the contrast, stamped upon, infused into the God-chosen people.

Now, what else but *faith* could bridge over these contrasts ? How could Israel have any other life than the life of *faith* ? What was their history but a continuous declaration : With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible ? From the song of Hannah to the song of Mary, Israel was in the low estate of the hand-maiden, and God, who is mighty, did great things to her. The same principle is declared by the gospel. The life of the apostle Paul eminently illustrates the kindred truth, that Christians have been crucified with Christ, and die daily ; but, raised by Divine power, walk in newness of life before God.

Why does God call Himself so frequently and with such peculiar emphasis the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ? It was not on account of their

excellence, because there are many other saints of the old covenant who are equal to them in faith and devotedness. God never calls Himself the God of Moses, of David, or of Daniel. He calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they are the fathers, unto whom He revealed Himself as the Covenant-God, and unto whom He gave the threefold promise of the nation, the Seed, or Messiah, and the land of inheritance. God's promise to the fathers, the relation in which He stood to them, was the foundation on which the confidence and hope of Israel rested; with the invocation of this Name they drew near. And since this covenant is for all ages, and centres in the salvation which is by Jesus Christ, God, in calling Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is revealing a name which can never lose its importance and significance. Jesus the Son of Abraham has come, and Israel, fallen through unbelief, is still reserved for the ultimate fulfilment of the promise at His second advent. Then shall the promise be fulfilled to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and that

which they never saw during their life, but realized by faith, shall then be revealed.

The thoughts and ways of God are indeed very different from our thoughts and ways ; and even after they are revealed in Scripture, man is slow to receive divine teaching. The history of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob is received as a very instructive record of the past, and as illustrating spiritual truths ; but few recognise the covenant with Abraham as the basis of history, and look forward to the fulfilment when, according to God's promise, all nations shall be blessed with God's chosen nation Israel. Hence the apostle calls it a mystery ; that is, something which man could not discover without divine revelation, but which he is anxious the Gentile Christians should understand. The unbelief of Israel, rejecting the Lord of glory, has made no change in the divine counsel. For a season Israel as a nation is rejected and scattered ; they are dead —cut off. But the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. What He promised to Abraham, what He announced by all the prophets, can

never be revoked. Messiah, the land, and the glory, are theirs. Jehovah-Shammah must yet be the name of Jerusalem. From Zion shall go forth the law of light and love and peace to all the nations. Israel's resurrection shall be the regeneration of the earth. As was typified by all deliverances from captivities, the ultimate deliverance shall be wrought by Jehovah Himself, and Israel shall be glorified, and the Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of His rising. As the angel, descending from the heavenly heights, and declaring the divine counsel, announced unto Mary, "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David : and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

See then what significance this name has, and shall have as long as sun, moon, and stars endure ; for as God said through Jeremiah, "If those ordinances depart from before me, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." Thus through the millennial ages

Israel shall praise God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and all Gentile nations shall thus praise God, and rejoice in the world-wide covenant made with these fathers; and the patriarchs themselves shall behold with joy the fulfilment of the promise—the land of blessing, the whole earth of blessing, until finally the city descends from heaven, and the tabernacle of God is for ever with man.

Jesus is of the seed of David, of the seed of Abraham.* Israel is chosen in Him for all ages. Israel's history has scarcely yet begun. The faithful Israelites, the kernel of the nation, though a minority, waited, believed, hoped. At the first coming of the Messiah the nation rejected Him, yet a remnant according to the election of grace believed. Throughout the period of Israel's national unbelief and dispersion, there are at all times some who as representatives of the true seed believe; but the real history of Israel, according to the

* Matthew i.

eternal counsel and the prediction of prophets, and the announcement of the angel Gabriel, has not commenced yet. The land is Palestine, the King is Jesus, the Son of David; the beginning of the reign is the return of Jesus, when His feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives, and when He shall pour out the Holy Ghost upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah. After this Israel shall never turn back. Their true David shall reign over them, and all nations shall rejoice with the Lord's people.

Thus the history recorded in the book of Genesis contains the outlines of the world's history. It is not an ancient or antiquated narrative of events which have served their end, but it is the foundation upon which rests the yet future history of earth. The next direct interference of God, the next personal and visible manifestation of Jesus, will introduce a new period of *national* and *earthly* history. It will not be the end of the world's history, and commencement of a heavenly and endless eternity; we are waiting for the coming of

the Lord Jesus from heaven to fulfil the promises given to the fathers, and by the prophets, concerning Israel and the nations.

How clear and striking is the reply which our Saviour gave to the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection from among the dead! "Ye do err greatly," the Lord, the heavenly wisdom, said unto them, "because ye know not the Scriptures, the written Word and revelation, nor the power of God, by the inward experience of the Holy Ghost." But how does Jesus prove from Scripture the resurrection? There are many passages which we should have deemed much more appropriate, such as Joseph giving commandment concerning his bones; or such passages in the prophet Isaiah: "Thy dead men shall live;" or the prediction in Daniel: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The Lord goes, however, to the very root of the question. God called Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob long

after they had died ; and God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

They to whom God vouchsafed to reveal His name whom He drew into communion with Himself, with whom He established His covenant, must needs possess a life which death cannot terminate or extinguish. Knowing and loving God, known and loved of Him, they possessed even in time life eternal ; and since the everlasting God called Himself *their* God, immortality was theirs. And not merely immortality, but *resurrection* ; for redemption must be connected with resurrection, as sin is connected with death, and moreover the promise of the covenant referred to the land ; and as the psalmist and prophets, so the patriarchs looked beyond the grave to the time when the meek shall inherit the earth.

The period of the patriarchs has a very peaceful and lovely character. God appeared and spoke to them. There was as yet no law. God revealed Himself, and simply said : “Walk before Me, and be thou perfect.” The word “patriarchal” has in all

languages of Christianized nations the meaning of simple, childlike, transparent, peaceful. But this character attaches more or less to all nations in the early stage of their history. What is the real peculiarity of the patriarchal life? What else but *faith*; that they lived before and with God, waiting for the promise, the heavenly country? They were not worldly, they were other-worldly. God was a very present God to them; while the future, the tabernacle of God on earth with man, was their constant hope.

Abraham is the father of the faithful; and he is also the model of a believer. His faith is recorded that we also may learn from it the nature, energy, trial, and victory of faith. How great is this man, called the friend of God, the father of all them that believe, the father of us all (Jews and Gentiles) who trust in the living God. How great is the honour of Abraham when the apostle says: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

* James ii. 23; Rom. iv. 11-16; Gal. iii. 26-29. *Sara's*

God, who chose him to this eminent position, appointed him also to be to us an example of faith. First, in obeying the call of God, to leave his kindred and to go whither he knew not; secondly, in believing impossibilities, looking away from facts simply to the promise of God; thirdly, in cherishing the God-given promise of the land though as yet only a stranger and pilgrim; fourthly, in sacrificing the visible fulfilment of the promise, believing that God would bring Isaac from the dead.

Abraham's faith was the substance of future things hoped for, and a conviction of things not seen. It triumphed over reason; it laughed at impossibilities; it looked beyond death and the faith is also mentioned. At first she doubted, but then she "also" received the promise. As Eve is the mother of all living, Sara is the mother of the faithful. (1 Peter iii. 5, 6.) She symbolizes "Jerusalem which is above and free, and the mother of us all." (Gal. iv. 26, 27.) God spoke of her: "I will bless her: yea, I will bless her." (Gen. xvii. 16-19, xviii. 10.) And she received the word by faith. She is the only woman in Scripture whose age is recorded. A whole chapter is devoted to the narration of her burial.

long night of the intermediate state; and in all this it gave glory to God; for this is the only glory we can give to God, believing that He can and will do what He promised.

To leave home and kindred, and to go forth into a new land, was at that time common enough among Shemitic tribes; but to do this in obedience to the call of God, and in sole reliance on His guidance and help, was the obedience of faith. Abraham was called to become a servant of God, and to found a society of men, whose centre was to be God: they were gathered round the name of the Lord, and His worship and service. The reward which was promised him was, that God would make him the father of a great nation, and that God's blessing would come through that nation to all the earth. Only faith could even understand this reward; for only faith knows what it is to be blessed of God. Only faith could grasp the promise; for reason could only reject it. Reason, considering the circumstances, could only stagger at the promise. But this was the excel-

lence and strength of Abraham's faith, that he did *not* consider his own body now dead ; that he did not reason ; that he did not look at difficulties and impossibilities ; but that he honoured God by "being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform." "If you would believe," says Luther, "you must crucify the question, How?" To believe God when reason says it may be so, and when sight says it is possible and likely, is not to honour God ; for under these conditions you would believe any one. But if you cannot look away entirely from difficulties to God's promise, then look first at God's promise ; and in the light of God's Word consider your difficulties, and see them vanquished.

How sorely was Abraham's faith tried ! How long had he to wait for the fulfilment of the promise ! Meanwhile, though living in tents, and though not possessing any portion of the land, and knowing that in this life he would not see it, yet he believed the inheritance was his ; and that God Himself had prepared a city, a permanent,

substantial, organized dwelling-place for him and his seed, and all the nations to whom the blessing was to come. He and his sons after him waited for that country, which would be heavenly in its character, given and established by divine power. It is not necessary here to enter into a distinction between the heavenly and the earthly Jerusalem ;* the expectation of the patriarchs and the prophets is the renewed earth in which Israel and all nations dwell in righteousness — the prospect stretches forth into the boundless ages when ultimately the tabernacle of God shall be with men. The patriarch's hope reached beyond death, and it had reference to themselves and their children and

* As is remarked by Delitzsch, the promise given unto the fathers never goes beyond Canaan as their future home and inheritance ; not even when Jacob calls the place where God appeared unto him the gate of heaven, does the divine promise go beyond the land "upon which thou sleepest." The apostle applies New Testament language to the faith of the fathers, because in substance their desire was after the promised permanent inheritance, in which God in His glory and love will be their everlasting portion. Compare the concluding remarks of Lecture xviii.

all the righteous, they expected that God would give to them and their seed the earth, that they would live then before and with God in their inheritance, and that from this centre blessings would flow to all lands. “Blessed are the meek : for they shall *inherit*”—because chosen of God unto adoption—“the earth.”

In this hope of Messiah and Messiah’s inheritance, Isaac and Jacob and Joseph lived and died. As illustrations of their faith, the apostle refers to their last acts of blessing. It is only by faith that we can bless ; for God alone is the fountain of blessing, and it is only in communion with Him, and in reliance on His promise, that men are able to pronounce benediction. The fathers, realizing the fulfilment of the promise, treated *the future possession as if it was theirs already*, and disposed of it, as the Spirit directed them, by their last will and blessing. It is this firm and assured conviction of the future things, the things hoped for, that is so strikingly illustrated in the last words of the patriarchs. Isaac looked to God alone, and

to His will and promise. The weakness and sin of Jacob in obtaining the blessing did not disturb Isaac's conviction that he had declared the will of God, which man's unfaithfulness and unworthiness cannot frustrate.

Jacob also, at the end of his long and weary pilgrimage, during which the Angel, the Redeemer, had been his guide and shepherd, blessed the sons of Joseph; and here again faith, and not sight or reason, caused him to give the greater blessing to the younger. "I have waited for thy salvation" was Jacob's exclamation; and worshipping,* adoring the Lord, who had redeemed him from all evil, he died.

The apostle does not speak of Joseph's varied life, but his faith shone forth brightly in his last injunction. Future things hoped for were present and certain to him. He knew God would remember His people in their affliction, and fulfil the promise given to Abraham; and he was anxious to show that his heart was with the

* Gen. xlix. 18.

children of Jacob, and that the blessing of the God of Abraham was his joy and hope.*

To return to Abraham. His faith was tested still more severely. He was called to offer up Isaac his son, his only son, the son in whom all his affections centred. But the natural affection of a father to his child was in this case inseparably connected with Abraham's whole spiritual life. In Isaac was the promise. All the hopes and expectations of faith centred in him. To offer up Isaac was to sacrifice the very object of faith. Here God seemed to contradict Himself—to take away His own gift, to revoke His promise. And here faith saw what reason could not see. Faith perceived the hidden meaning of the command. It was to *try faith*. Before Isaac's birth Abraham simply believed God's Word. Faith had no outward help; it rested solely on God's promise. Now Isaac was given, faith's object had become visible, and hence there was not the same exclusive leaning on God. The Lord tested Abraham

* Compare Gen. i. 25; Josh. xxiv. 32.

when He commanded him to offer up Isaac. It was faith's wisdom which recognised the command as a temptation from God. Now this is the believer's experience. God takes from us that which by faith was first obtained, because we make a Christ of it, because we rest in our faith, in our peace, in our conversion, in our experience. God teaches us that we must believe in Him always, as we believed in Him at our conversion, when we had nothing else to trust in but His Word. All gifts obtained by faith have to be given up unto death, and that by faith.

But Abraham believed again, as at first. Isaac's non-existence was no difficulty to him when the promise first came; and now *Isaac's death* is no difficulty. God can bring him again from the dead. This Abraham believed as the only solution of the difficulty; for God's Word must be fulfilled; and since Isaac is to be offered up, the Lord God Almighty will surely raise him from the dead.

What depth of self-searching, what agony, what crucifixion this trial involved, who can describe?

Here was indeed a summing-up of all his previous life and conflict of faith. But faith conquered, and in faith, love and hope. For when we believe God, and only then, and only in that proportion, we love God, and do not withhold from Him the most cherished heart-object, and when we believe God, we hope even against hope; as Luther says, "I could run into Christ's arms though He had a sharp sword in each hand." Abraham received back Isaac in a figure—a figure of the resurrection of Jesus, the consummation of Israel's history; resurrection-life after death and burial; the pledge and source of our incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance.

Children of God, on whom the blessing of Abraham has come through Jesus Christ, live by faith! Crucify reason, consider not the things which are visible; confess, manifest it by your character and walk, that you are strangers on earth; wait for the heavenly country, living even now in the spirit of the golden millennial age. Learn from Abraham to believe in God that raised up Jesus from the dead. Reason sees your guilt; faith sees your

acquittal, for Christ is risen; reason sees your sinfulness and infirmity; faith sees your power and strength in newness of life, for Christ is risen; reason sees your affliction, sickness, sorrow, old age, and death; but faith sees your glory, renewal of youth, joy, and strength everlasting, for Christ is risen. Live in *tents*; set not your affections on things below. Live in the tents the patriarchal life of prayer, and a reverent filial walk with God. When the soul is cast down and disquieted within you, when the heart is heavy, when Isaac, in whom you delight, faith's child, is to be sacrificed, then believe, hope in God, and know that you shall yet praise Him. Thus we give glory to God.





CHAPTER V.

Moses.

Mall the great men whom God raised up in Israel, there is none whom the nation regarded with a more profound veneration than Moses. By him they were brought out of Egypt; through him they received the law. During forty years he ruled in Jeshurun, combining prophetic, priestly, and royal dignity. They owed to him, under God, all that was precious to them as a nation. There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face; who had assigned to him the position of mediator, of a servant in all God's house. And as his position was wonderful, his character also

was marvellous. In him we see the majesty of a solemn, God-fearing, and chastened man, whose soul was constantly dwelling apart in the adoration of the Most High, combined with a most singular meekness, and a most fervent and self-denying affection. His love to God shines forth in his love to Israel, which forgave, hoped, endured all things; which ingratitude never weakened, and disappointment never blunted. We see in this man of God courage and gentleness, fortitude and patience—zeal for God's glory and motherly meekness towards the people. He bore the image of Him who afterwards came to Israel the perfect manifestation of divine love.

His words also seem to surpass all other prophetic words in grandeur, lucid simplicity, and power. And the five books which bear his name, as they are unequalled in all literature in their beauty and majesty, became the most cherished treasure of his nation.

It is most interesting that Scripture gives us a picture of Moses, from his infancy to his departure.

The Scripture biography of some great men begins with their manhood. We do not know anything of the early course of their lives. Thus we read abruptly of Elijah the Tishbite, appearing with a prophetic announcement. But in the case of Samuel, of David, of our blessed Lord Himself, we are told the history of their childhood and youth. Now the apostle, in reviewing the life of Moses, wishes to show us that it was the life of faith. And thus the history of Moses is to testify of righteousness by faith, though he is the lawgiver. In like manner Paul often proved, that the law was only given to point out the righteousness which is by faith.

Faith in the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, faith in the divine promise, enabled the parents of Moses to look away from the king's commandment, and to confide in the unseen God, and to realize the promised future. Thus was his life preserved by an act of faith in the power and mercy of the covenant God.

Brought up by the daughter of Pharaoh as her

son, instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, the faith which was in his father and mother, and of which they doubtless constantly testified to him, seemed to be in an uncongenial atmosphere, and exposed to most adverse influences. But when he was come to years, when he reached the age in which the world with its attractive beauty is fully appreciated by the youthful heart, it was then that his faith was not eclipsed, but manifested, not shipwrecked, but, as it were, consummated ; it was then that the good seed which for years had quietly been cherished by the divine Spirit in his soul sprung up in most lovely flower ; the riches and honours of the world had not choked it.

The only free man of his nation, the only son of Abraham, who need not have called him a Hebrew, he voluntarily made the choice ; he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. His heart was with God, and with God's people he would take his position. Abraham was called to *leave* his kindred, Moses was called to *join* his

kindred. In both cases the choice was the same—equally free, equally difficult.

Moses gave up the *world*; ambition had the prospect of honour and greatness; the culture of the most civilized state was fascinating to the mind; treasure and wealth held out potent allurement. All this—and does it not comprise “all that is in the world,” and in its most attractive and elevated manner?—Moses gave up. And, on the other side, what awaited him? To join a down-trodden nation of slaves, whose only riches was the promise of the invisible God.

As the choice of Moses was perfectly free, so we enquire with greater interest, What was it which determined the choice? And here we might at first fancy it was the impulse of a generous and patriotic heart, which espoused the cause of the suffering and despised race. Such a feeling is indeed noble, but we may doubt whether it would have been strong enough to make the sacrifices which Moses made; and whether it would not have preferred the path of

worldly wisdom and policy, and sought to ameliorate the people's condition by securing first a position of power and influence. The Scripture and the subsequent history prove that it was *faith* which made the choice. Not reason, not sentiment, but the mysterious clinging of the heart to the promise of God, the realizing of things not seen, and the confident expectation of the future reward. Moses chose to suffer affliction with Israel, not because they were his people, but because they were *God's* people. The object of his choice was God; the God who chose his fathers, who revealed to them His truth and grace, and commanded them to walk before Him without fear; the God who was not ashamed to be called their God, and to whom he had been dedicated in his infancy.

We call this choice free, because Moses was in the anomalous position of an Israelite at the court of Pharaoh severed from the bondage and the reproach of his nation. But it was free in a yet higher sense. For in choosing God as the object

of our love and service, the heart for the first time becomes free. Mysterious as this act is, this turning-point in the history of the soul, we know that it is the birth of our liberty; that it is really the first act of perfect liberty, of conscious liberty, the first act in which the soul, looking down into its depths as into a transparent lake, does what it wills to do. "I will arise and go to my Father." I will love and serve God. I will confess Christ. I will be the Lord's. And so God makes us "willing," and sets us free; and here is the great triumph of divine power in its wisdom and love. We *cannot* but obey God, yet we freely turn to God. Necessity and liberty are blended. The choice was made by faith; and that which was attractive to faith was the very thing which to reason and nature is repulsive—the reproach of Christ. It is the cross, which is a magnet, drawing the heart.

There seems an anachronism in the expression "the reproach of Christ." But the expression is chosen purposely. We know that the outgoings

of Messiah were from of old. In the sacrifice of Isaac, in the humiliation of Joseph, in the sufferings of Israel, we see foreshadows of the perfect Servant, who was to be both the Sufferer and the Redeemer of His people. "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." Israel is a type of Christ. The ancient Jewish teachers spoke of the pangs and sorrows of Messiah, and divided them into three—those which He would suffer Himself, those which would be endured by His people before and by His people after the advent. Thus as the apostle speaks of filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in his body for his body's sake, Moses by faith beheld in Israel's sufferings, and those that awaited him, the reproach of the true Israel, Israel's glory and hope, the Messiah.*

* Compare 1 Cor. x. 4; 1 Peter i. 10. Christ, as the Word, the Messenger of the covenant, was *with Israel*. The coming Christ was also typified by Israel; hence the typical meaning of Israel's sufferings, of Joseph's, of David's. The expression "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches" is therefore one which comprises many aspects. The New Testament counterpart may be seen in 1 Peter. iv. 13; Phil. iii. 10; Col. ii. 24; 2 Tim. iii. 12, &c.

Moses thus believed in the Redeemer-God that was to come, and by faith he became a partaker of the sufferings, even as he expected to be a partaker of the inheritance. He had regard to the recompence of the reward. His faith was the confidence of things hoped for. And through the most painful trials, during forty years of incessant care, toil, sorrow, grief of heart, amidst the greatest difficulties and struggles, he held fast this hope; he bore the burden of the nation patiently and lovingly, in the constant exercise of priestly intercession, relying on the Lord, rejoicing in the Christ, the Rock, that followed them. As he himself expressed it in his Psalm, the everlasting God was his dwelling-place; he knew the sin of man, and the righteous anger of God, but Jehovah's mercy made him rejoice, and the beauty of the Lord was upon him. (Ps. xc.)

On mount Nebo his earthly pilgrimage was ended. Mysterious, unwitnessed by mortal eye, was his exodus from this troubled life. Only angels were present, who had guarded the little ark of bulrushes in which a hundred and twenty years before the

beautiful babe lay helpless, except for the omnipotence and faithfulness of the covenant-God, to whom the faith of loving parental hearts had commended him. While the peace of God filled his soul, the archangel Michael guarded his body. Centuries after, we behold him and Elijah descend from the celestial realms, and on the mount of transfiguration they conversed with the Son of God about the exodus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. How bright is the light, how exceeding great is the glory, how abundant the recompence of the reward! How blessed was the choice of faith, which preferred the affliction of God's people and the reproach of Messiah to all the pleasures of sin and treasures of Egypt!

The forty years which Moses lived as a shepherd in the wilderness of Midian seem a long period of inactivity and obscure leisure. For what purpose, we feel inclined to ask, this waste of years? God watches over the days and hours of His chosen people. He who has numbered the very hairs of our head, will He not watch also over our years?

Moses had made the great choice ; he had forsaken Egypt's grandeur and felicity; he had embraced the reproach of Christ. He learned now in the solitude of Midian to crucify self ; to wait quietly on God ; to give up his own will and strength ; to be a stranger and pilgrim, even as his fathers were.

God's servants are often sent into the desert. So was John the Baptist, ere he began his short but brilliant witness-life, a bright torch ; thus did Saul, after his conversion, go into Arabia. And was not the ministry of Jesus, in whom was no earth-born impure element of false zeal or strength, preceded by the thirty years' stillness of Nazareth?

After forty years the Lord appeared unto Moses. Scripture does not conceal from us the timidity, the unbelief, the resistance of Moses, when the great command was given to him to deliver Israel out of Egypt. Formerly he was too ready and swift to unsheathe the sword, and to rescue the oppressed. Now he is conscious of man's weakness, of his own utter inability for so great a task. But God's word and promise over-

came all his difficulties. Moses asked, Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh? The Lord answered by reminding him *who He was*, He revealed His name, and promised His presence and all-sufficient help.

By faith Moses went to Egypt and to Pharaoh, and neither the wrath of the king nor the murmuring, the bitter reproaches and the unbelief of his own nation, moved him. He endured, because before the eyes of his heart stood the mighty God, who is invisible. Moses is the first of whom Scripture tells us that performed miracles; believing the Word of God, he showed great and mighty signs.

By faith he ordained the passover and the sprinkling of blood. He believed the mercy of God, who had chosen Israel, and was their Redeemer, passing over their iniquity, transgression, and sin, delivering them through the blood of the Lamb. Here was the centre and heart of his faith. As the representative and leader of the nation, he had first to receive himself the salvation of God by faith.

Notice this passover is his first ordinance to Israel: before the giving of law was the gospel. "Believe, and thou shalt be saved." The first command given by Moses was, "Believe and live." Afterwards the law was given by him, and the law speaks not of faith, but says, "Do this and live." But salvation is of God through faith, redemption is by the blood of the Lamb. Moses himself preaches here salvation without works, by grace, through faith in the Substitute.

By faith he led them through the Red Sea. Israel murmured. They reproached him for bringing them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. On the faith of Moses rested the burden of the whole nation. He said unto the people, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you to-day." But while he spake these courageous words in the name and for the honour of Jehovah, his heart was crying to the Lord, "Deliver us." And to this silent prayer was the answer, "Why criest thou unto Me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they

go forward." God's miracles pass through some believers' hearts. They are not merely the children of divine omnipotence and mercy, but the travail and anguish of believing and praying hearts. Elijah *prayed*, and it rained not; he prayed again, and it rained. Thus we are told in the epistle of James; but in the book of Kings we read only the miraculous facts.

This faith of Moses will be remembered for ever; and the song of Moses, the servant of God, for ever associated with the song of the Lamb; for Israel's deliverance out of the Red Sea is a type of the true and final deliverance from all evil, from sin and death, from the world and Satan. And it is by faith only that we can pass through the sea as by dry land. We grasp the promise: "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and they shall not overflow thee." The Lord is our salvation, and in Him is our trust.

Israel is a typical nation. The things which happened unto them are recorded for our instruction and comfort. The things which happened

unto them, happen unto us also. Hence all Scripture is to us truth, reality, experience ; it is not a record of the past merely, but it is an ever-new description of the experience of all God's children.

We also were in Egypt, and had to learn that we could not bring about our deliverance by our own strength and zeal. Like Moses, we had to flee from such attempts of self-wrought emancipation into the wilderness, and wait quietly upon the Lord. When we were still, and knew that it was not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, God showed *mercy*. We also have kept by faith the passover and the sprinkling of blood ; when, acknowledging our guilt and helplessness, we believed in the Lamb of God, when in faith we repented, eating bitter herbs, and began to gird our loins and to prepare for the walk and fight through the wilderness. We also went through the Red Sea, and then sang the song of praise to God ; when we were taught the power of Christ's resurrection, and when the Holy Ghost, separating us by the cross from Egypt, brought us through resurrection

unto the new life, and raised our affections to the things above.

This history of the spiritual Israel, described in Scripture and by the saints of God, is so clear and so full of great thoughts, that many know and appreciate it intellectually; it is so beautiful and ideal that many grasp it admiringly with their imagination. But do we know it by *faith*? Have we by faith kept the passover, left Egypt, and passed through the Red Sea? In the intellectual and imaginative belief there is no pain, no contrition of heart, no repentance, no godly sorrow; there is no travailing in birth. But faith is the trust of a guilty, sin-convinced, and helpless soul in a crucified Saviour.

Israel in Egypt. Look at another aspect of this history: "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." The saints who are precious in His sight, whom He purchased with the blood of His own Son, and for whom He has prepared an everlasting inheritance, God's elect must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Who

would recognize them in their earthly sufferings as the favourites of God? Despised of the world, they are a royal priesthood, and the joint-heirs of Christ; and oppressed with manifold trials and sufferings, they are yet the possessors of all things.

God chasteneth whom He loveth; and it becomes the future kings to have the experience of the Master, and to take their cross upon them. Yet even while they are thus bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus, they are upheld by God. The measure of their trial is fixed by infinite wisdom and tenderness. The angel of the covenant is afflicted in all their afflictions; God regards them as the apple of His eye. The suffering and tried believer has the most consoling experience of God's goodness and faithfulness; nay, of God Himself as their portion. Joseph in his prison, David in the mountain solitude, Jonah in the belly of the whale, Daniel in the lions' den, the three men in the fiery furnace, Peter chained to Roman soldiers, Paul and Silas in their fetters at Philippi, John in the isle of Patmos, were they

not all able to praise the Lord, and to rejoice in His love?

Weak and despised believers are the pillars of the world. The intercession of Moses prevails to avert judgment from a whole nation ; Samuel prays, and it thunders, and the enemies are defeated ; Elijah's faith brings down rain on the parched ground ; for the sake of Paul, and through him, the ship's crew were saved, and not one of them perished. God will do all things to secure His people's good. Sun and moon stand still in their course ; the dial's hand goes back more than an hour ; iron swims on the river ; the barrel of meal and cruse of oil fail not ; five loaves and two fishes feed a multitude.

It is the will of God to do great things for us. All things are ours ; all things work together for good to them that love God—who are the called according to His purpose ; all things are freely given unto us with Christ, the Son, whom God spared not, but gave up for our everlasting salvation. But it is the will of God that we should learn *faith*.

By faith a poor and guilty sinner looks to Jesus Christ crucified, and says, By grace I have been saved; by faith, continuing his gaze on Jesus, he adds, The Father Himself loveth me; by faith he beholds in the wounds of Jesus the election of God, free, spontaneous, never-changing—the choice which in the still eternity counted him one of the jewels, and set him apart for the glory of the ages to come. Resting in this boundless and amazing love of God, as it shines through the Saviour Jesus Christ, the believer lives a life of constant difficulty, trial, conflict, and yet of continual victory and thanksgiving. Faith says, Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Faith asks triumphantly, Who can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus? Triumphantly it is true; but with deep humility, and in the painful conflict with sin, with troubles and temptations of the present life, a wretched man is the believer, and yet a man giving thanks to God.* Saving faith humbles. No mark is more certain and more

* Rom. viii. 23; vii. 24, 25.

universal. Suspect all faith that does not clothe the soul with humility. Suspect all faith in which there is not pain, sorrow, conflict.

But if we die daily, let us also rejoice in Christ Jesus.

True faith hath a "yet not I."* There is a threefold "yet not I." One that relates to sin, one that relates to spiritual life, and one that relates to duties. "I sin; yet not I." Delighting in the law of God after the inward man, I still do that I would not; it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

"I live; yet not I." Christ liveth in me, and that because I believe in the Saviour, that He loved me, and that by His own gift of Himself He is mine.

I work, yet not I, as the apostle Paul writes: "I have laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

* From Bridge's *Sermons on Faith*. (Edited by the Countess of Huntingdon.)

Christ dwells in the heart *by faith*. Hence the wonderful paradox : I, yet not I. He that by grace gives up himself shall find his soul—his life ; his name, his individuality, shall endure for ever ; he shall abide and dwell in God for evermore. He has found himself, he has been found of the Great Shepherd. And he, who belongs to the Christ of God, shall inherit all things ; for all things are ours if we be Christ's, who is the Son and the glory of God.





CHAPTER VI.

The Better Thing Foreseen for Us.

DO we think enough of faith, chosen by divine omnipotent love to be its channel? God alone doeth great marvels, but it is through the faith of His saints.

All the victories of Israel were wrought by faith. Divine power and grace redeemed them on that memorable night; but it was the faith of Moses which kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood. It was God who divided the Red Sea, but in answer to the silent prayer of faith which ascended from the heart of His servant. All miracles of healing recorded in the Gospels were wrought by faith. Jesus prayed to the Father,

and then fed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes. Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven, and then said, "Ephphatha. Be thou loosed." Jesus by faith thanked God that He heard Him always, and then uttered His mighty "Lazarus, come forth."

And faith was wrought also in the recipient of divine favour. "Thy faith hath healed thee;" "Be it unto thee as thou hast believed." Such were frequently Christ's words.

The people who perished in the wilderness entered not into God's rest because of unbelief; and because of their unbelief, Jesus could not show many miracles in some places. "Believe only, and thou shalt see the glory of God."

Israel's history is the history of God's omnipotent saving grace, and of man's faith. From heaven descends miracle; from earth ascends faith. From the election of Abraham to the birth of Moses, from the passover and the Red Sea to the dividing of the river Jordan, all is miracle, and all has to go through the faith of some

chosen saint. Israel is before Jericho, a walled and fenced city; it is not by power and might, but by faith, that they are to take it. How utterly foolish it must have seemed to the Canaanites, to see that procession day after day: the men of war went round the city, and seven priests before them, bearing the ark of the Lord and blowing trumpets. But Israel *believed*. To give up their own strength, and to put no confidence in their number or valour, and to trust in God, who commanded them—to do what to reason appeared so utterly useless—was indeed faith. The walls of Jericho fell; and, according to God's command, the city was burnt with fire, and all that was therein; for the iniquity of the Amorites was full.

Is this not written for our learning? The walls of unbelief, superstition, and ungodliness, yield to no earthly armour and power. It is not by compulsion, nor by reasoning; it is not by the weapons which this world supplies, that these walls can be destroyed. It is by the Word of God, and by the Word declared in faith. Ministers and

people, they who blow the trumpet, and also the people who are with them, are to be united believing in the power of God. Congregations are only too apt to let the ministers go forth by themselves with the message; they forget that they are all called to strive with the minister in the gospel, to pray, to labour with him.

The inhabitants of Jericho all perished except one. We ask, What virtue, what excellence, distinguished this chosen one among so many thousands, and commended her to the divine clemency? God hath chosen things base in this world. Sin red as scarlet He can forgive, and make whiter than snow. Rahab *believed*. She heard the message, that God was with Israel, and that He was about to give them Canaan, because the measure of Canaan's sin was full. All Jericho had heard it. The fame of Israel had gone forth while they were yet in the wilderness. Their victories over Amalek, over Og king of Bashan, over Sihon king of the Amorites, had been noised abroad. Jericho had heard that Jehovah was

leading forth His people, and coming to judge Canaan. The message was clear, the evidence proving its truth strong and patent; but only Rahab believed. Man's unbelief has its source, not in the want of evidence or proof, with which the divine message is accompanied, but in the self-righteous, sinful heart, which does not acknowledge the justice of God's anger, and does not thirst after His mercy. But Rahab, though a great sinner, believed both that Canaan was to be judged, and that Israel was God's chosen people. God had granted her conviction of sin and true repentance.

We measure things by an earthly and false standard. We make a great distinction between vice and sin ; between crime and the inward transgression of God's law ; between outward degradation and the pollution of the heart. But how solemn and touching is the fact, so emphatically brought before us in the Gospels, that moral Pharisees rejected, hated, and crucified the blessed Jesus ; and that publicans, and sinners, and harlots

received Him in repentance, in faith, in love, and life-long self-sacrifice. Rahab believed with that true and genuine faith which, looking away from the things seen, grasps the promise and trusts all to the unseen God. Her faith manifested itself in action, in obedience. And she was saved ; though her house was not exposed to danger, yet she was at peace and in safety ; she was separated from judgment and destruction. The line of scarlet thread was to her the sign and seal of the covenant of pardon and salvation. Thus is the chief of sinners safe, if he trusts in the Saviour. Who more exposed than he to the righteous judgment of God ? Who safer in the cleft of the smitten Rock ?

By grace through faith. This is the explanation of the history of Rahab the sinner. She was pardoned and rescued, numbered now among Israel, a daughter of Abraham, father of the believing. We see her name enrolled in the imperishable annals of the sacred history. The evangelist Matthew records her name among the

ancestors of Jesus. She is one of the mothers of Jesus, and teaches us the wondrous love of our Saviour God.

And in that earnest, severe, and most searching epistle of James, the only two examples given of true, genuine, living faith are Abraham, the friend of God, and Rahab.

"And what shall I say more?" Time would fail to go through the whole history of Israel, the period of the judges and kings, and to show all the golden links of faith in the wonderful chain. Let us learn from this the eternal and spiritual character of these Scriptures. The history of the judges, Gideon, Barak, Jephthae, and Samson ;* the history of the kings from David downward ;

* "*Fides nobilitat omnes*: it is faith that raiseth a man. They did great things ; but those things are upon record only as they were wrought by faith ; yet their faith was weak, and laboured under many infirmities. Look into the 11th of the Hebrews : there is no mention made of Samson's infirmities, nor of Rahab's. Mention is made of their faith, but their infirmities passed by, and not one mentioned ; and all the great things which they did were mentioned only upon the account of faith. God honours His own work, faith."

the history of the prophets beginning with Samuel, last of the judges and first of the prophets, is a history of faith, grasping the promises, obeying the divine voice, overcoming the world, suffering and dying in the Lord.*

By faith they wrought great things. They subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness. You remember the victories over Philistines and Moabites, Syrians and Edomites, which judges and

* Verses 32-38. It is evident that the apostle feels quite overwhelmed with the numerous illustrations of the power of faith in the acts and sufferings of Israel's great men. This accounts for the absence of strict chronological order in these verses. Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, and David are enumerated first (without conjunctive particle) as warriors, then (joined by *τεκαὶ* as introducing something different) the group of prophets. Verse 33 : Subdued kingdoms refers to period of judges, obtained promises to 2 Sam. vii., stopped the mouths of lions, Dan. vi. 22. Verse 34 : Quenched violence of fire, Dan. iii., escaped the edge of the sword (Elijah, Elisha, David, also Macc. ii.), out of weakness were made strong, like Samson, after his declension (some think of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx.; Isa. xxxviii.), waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens, 1 Macc., where the same expressions are often used. Verse 35 : Women received

kings obtained by faith in the living God. You remember the justice and equity with which Joshua, Samuel, and David ruled in Israel. They executed justice and judgment unto all the people. They were able to appeal to the whole nation, that in faithful and disinterested love they had ruled over them. And what was the secret spring of this righteousness? It was what Joshua expressed, "As for me and my house, we will serve the

their dead to life again, 1 Kings xvii.; 2 Kings iv. 17. "Tortured," &c., refers to the touching story of Eleazer, and of the seven brothers and their heroic mother. (2 Macc. v. 1; vii.) Verse 37 : Stoned, Zechariah (2 Chron. xxiv. 20 ; Matt. xxiii. 35), sawn asunder, according to old tradition, Isaiah the prophet ; slain with the sword, 1 Kings ix. 20. The saints had to endure poverty and every kind of destitution. Notice how all the opposition of the world and rage of Satan cannot pluck Christ's sheep out of His hand, or prevail against the congregation of the Lord. There will always be a testimony for God. How cheerfully ought we to bear our comparatively light burden. And if any brother reading these lines has been counted worthy by the Lord to "suffer great things for Christ's name's sake" (Acts ix. 16), may the voice of the Saviour uphold him : "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven."

Lord;”* what David said, “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me?” They believed in God. By faith they obtained promises; for David and the prophets were still and lowly before the Lord, and received His message with meekness and a trembling heart. Thus were they the children of Abraham, who by faith subdued kings, judged righteously, and received the promises and the confidential disclosures of the divine counsel. They had Abraham’s faith, and did the works of Abraham.

Faith accomplishes marvellous deliverances. The mouths of lions can do no injury to believing Daniel, for his God sent His angel to shut the lions’ mouths. The violence of fire, heated seven-times furiously, is quenched not by water, but by faith; the fourth man—fourth, where there are three believers; third, where there are two Emmaus disciples—was with them because they believed. They escaped the edge of the sword, as David escaped Saul’s wrath, and Elijah that of Jezebel.

* Josh. xxiii. xxiv.; 1 Sam. xii. 3, 4; 2 Sam. viii. 15.

But faith has not merely great works and great victories, it has also great trials, sufferings, and painful deaths. Now the apostle enumerates not the persons who suffered, but the evils which faith endured. Hoping for a better resurrection, faithful Israelites in the times of the Maccabees endured agonizing tortures; others in faith endured stripes, imprisonments, protracted hardship, destitution, hunger and nakedness, constant suffering and dying. Some, like Zechariah, were stoned; others, as tradition says of Isaiah, were sawn asunder; others, like the prophets in the days of Jezebel, were put to death by the sword. And all lived and suffered by faith, looking forward unto the self-same golden time which we are awaiting, the coming of the Lord, to establish His kingdom and manifest His glory. God has so united the children of the old dispensation and the disciples of Jesus, that the fathers are not to receive the fulfilment of their hopes until we also receive the full adoption.

Let us learn from these bright examples. We

may make use of extraordinary examples to encourage our ordinary faith in ordinary times. These models are on a very grand and large scale, and so we can plainly see them.

Faith works and suffers ; faith is busy and energetic. It is our only strength and victory. In suffering we glorify God as well as in action ; and in suffering it is only faith which grasps the promises, and rests on the bosom of God in quiet and loving humility. Suffering is an honour God puts on His saints. To them it is *given* to suffer for Christ's sake. A life without affliction and self-denial, a life without the cross, is not likely to precede the life with the crown. When the Church becomes lukewarm, there is little hardship endured, and little cross-bearing. Let tried believers not doubt that they are precious in God's sight. They whom the world despises are generally the God-chosen nobility, of whom the world is not worthy.

See to your faith, listening to God's Word, hearing His call, relying on His promise. "What is

sanctification but faith incarnate ?”* And as a true believer is very sensible of his unbelief, dwell much on Christ as the Alpha, the ever-new and sweet beginning. Christ rebukes but acknowledges, honours, and helps little faith, though He commends strong faith.

Look also at Christ, the Omega. The saints of old looked forward to the better resurrection—that first resurrection of the just spoken of by Daniel, by our Lord, by the apostle Paul, and in the book of Revelation.†

These all, having the grace of God in their hearts, so manifested it in their lives, sufferings, and death, that they obtained a good report. They are now waiting in the realm of peace for the final consummation.

Meanwhile new covenant believers have received some “better thing.” What is the better thing foreseen by God for us?

The first and most obvious difference between

* Bridge.

† Dan. xii. 2; Luke xx. 35; Phil. iii. 11; Rev. xx. 6.

the old saints and the Church is, that the promised salvation was to them *entirely* in the future; while we have lived to see the first advent, we also are looking forward to the fulfilment of God's promises at the second coming. But to Israel the Messianic advent, with its salvation and glory, was altogether in the future. It is a wonderful privilege that we can say, "Messiah has come! The sacrifice has been offered!" But does this difference imply anything real, or is it merely a difference in clearness of vision and degree of enjoyment? While we must never forget the unity of all God's saints in the one faith and one hope, yet we must not overlook the clearly-taught difference between the position of the Church of Christ and that of believers before the advent.

The promise of the Father, which is contained according to Christ's teaching in all the prophets, was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. This great culminating and comprehensive promise, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, presupposes the incarnation, death, and ascension of the Son of God.

Thus John the Baptist perceived that the first link of the chain had appeared, and declared that Jesus "shall baptize with the Holy Ghost." This baptism had never taken place yet in Israel. Nor could it take place during Christ's life. John spoke of it as something future. John himself, though in the old dispensation there was none greater than he, is declared by our Saviour to be less than the privileged saints of the new covenant. This gift of the Holy Ghost is connected by our Lord with His death and His going to the Father; and the evangelist John explains to us that it is connected with the glorified humanity of Jesus.* Hence, in a very real and important sense, the Comforter has come, since the ascension of the Lord, in a manner in which He never did and could come before.

The day of Pentecost is the beginning of days. Here is not an isolated and exceptional manifestation, but the commencement of a new period. Believers henceforth are spoken of as sealed with the Spirit, as having received the Spirit of God's

* John vii. 38, 39, xiv. 16, xv. 26, xvi. 7, &c.

Son in their hearts, as having an unction from above. They were exhorted, not to seek "a fresh baptism of the Spirit," but not to grieve the Spirit, whom they *had* received—not to forget that they *were* the temple of the Holy Ghost; and as they had received the Spirit, so to walk in the Spirit.

The reasons why this gift is now bestowed are manifold and obvious.

1. The Spirit's advent is connected with the finished work of redemption. Because the blood has been shed, the Spirit descends.

2. The Spirit comes through the preaching of faith, and not by the law. It is when the forgiveness of sin is declared that God puts His Spirit within our hearts. Now it is true that Old Testament believers looked forward to the atonement, and were comforted by the assurance of God's grace. But, as we have seen, the way of access into the holiest was not yet made manifest; the conscience was not brought perfectly into liberty. Hence the influence of the Holy Ghost during their period must have been different from His

indwelling now, when we have been actually brought nigh by the blood of Christ. But,

3. The Spirit, as an indwelling Spirit, descends from the incarnate, crucified, and glorified Son of God—the Christ or anointed Head of the Church. Now as before the advent there was not the humanity on the throne, the relation of believers to the coming Lord and Jehovah was indeed mediated by the Spirit; but it must have been different from the mystical union as it now subsists between the Head and the members.

Wonderful is our position; and nothing does so humble and abase the believer as the contrast between the high position given to him of God, and his actual state, life, and conduct. How glorious is the Head! how weak, wayward, and sinful are the members! Are we indeed one with Christ, called to live in the perpetual sunshine of God's love, in the blessed and lively hope of glory; called to represent Jesus in our daily life, to speak and act, to suffer and overcome, as He gave us an ensample, and in the strength of the life, which descends from

Him into our souls, have we received the Spirit, who dwells in us constantly, who bears witness with our spirits that we are God's sons, who intercedes in us, so identifying Himself with our sorrow and need as to become a suppliant with us? Are we thus identified and united with the Lord Jesus, He the Christ, and we the Christians, anointed with the Spirit, as His? Oh, what manner of men ought we to be! And when we compare ourselves with the fathers, who were not chosen to see and hear on earth the things which were reserved for us, how gigantic does the faith of Abraham and the patriarchs appear, how stupendous the sacrifice, the patience, the love, the unworldliness of Moses and the prophets! Do we believe, love, suffer, and endure as the fathers did?

Here is no cause for elation, but for humility; let none of us be puffed up by a merely intellectual head knowledge of the "glorious position of the Church, as distinguished from the Old Testament saints;" but let us glorify God in these men of faith, whose lives are recorded for our learning;

let us imitate their example ; let us always cherish their memory with veneration and affection.

And as for their future position, let us rest satisfied with what Scripture reveals. God is not ashamed to be called their God. Jesus shall bring them with Him at His coming. At present the spirits of just men are perfect, and in the heavenly Jerusalem. It seems that in the future kingdom they shall stand in a special relation to the earthly Jerusalem and Israel ; that they shall be more immediately connected with the earthly inheritance which was promised them of old. The twelve apostles also, though they belong to the Pentecostal Church, we are told, shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

At the coming of the Lord, the hope of the ancient Israel (including also the saints before Abraham) and the hope of the Pentecostal Church will be fulfilled. The union of all believers will be manifested. This union will be to the glory of God, and part of the blessedness of His people. And in this union we think there will be

variety ; differences of glory. Different positions and relationships may be maintained during the millennial age, while there is perfect union and communion, Christ Himself being the all-glorious centre.

And as we believe that there will be differences of glory among individuals, why may there not be differences of glory and position for the saints of the various dispensations ? These things are partly hidden, that we may dwell all the more on that which is clear, and hasten to the coming of our God and Saviour.





CHAPTER VII.

The Exemplar of Faith.

TO continue stedfast in faith, patient and enduring to the end, looking unto the appearing of the Lord—this was the exhortation with which the apostle concluded the tenth chapter. This exhortation was not so much interrupted as confirmed and illustrated by the review of the past history of God's children, who exemplify in a most striking manner the nature, trial, and victory of faith. Appealing to their sense of the union of the family of God, and reminding them that God had provided some better thing for them, he repeats the exhortation to steady perseverance in the ways of faith and patience. If all

the saints of God lived, suffered, endured, and conquered by faith, shall not we also? If the saints who lived before the incarnation, before the redemption was accomplished, before the High Priest had entered for us into the heavenly sanctuary, trusted in the midst of all discouragements and trials, how much more ought we who know the name of Jesus, who have received the beginning, the instalment of the great Messianic promise.

We who have still to walk in the narrow path which alone leads to glory are encouraged and instructed by the cloud of witnesses, the innumerable company of saints, who testified amid the most varied circumstances of suffering and temptation, that the just live by faith, and that faith is the victory which overcometh the world. The memory of those children of God, whose lives are recorded for our learning and consolation, animates us, and we feel upheld as it were by their sympathy and by the consciousness, that although few and weak, strangers and pilgrims on earth, we belong to a great and mighty, nay,

a victorious army, part of which has already entered into the land of peace.

But the cloud of witnesses* is not the object on which our heart is fixed. They testify of faith, and we cherish their memory with gratitude, and walk with a firmer step, because of the music of

* "So great a cloud" denoting the exceeding great number of saints, a multitude which no man can number. The most remarkable instances of faith had been singled out by the apostle; but soon he felt that time would fail him to enumerate all, while he implied that these eminent saints whom he singled out were only representatives of the thousands of faithful ones who in every age served God. "Witness" may either refer to the saints as beholding us, and our walk of faith or unbelief; or it may mean their testimony to the necessity, the nature and power of faith. In favour of the first view may be adduced—(a) The nature of the illustration itself. In a race there are spectators who judge, and by their presence encourage. (β) The similar use of the word witness in 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 2. But the second view seems more in accordance with the whole scope of the passage, and is both simpler and more comprehensive. The saints' witness, which is recorded in Scripture, and which we are always to remember, is to the faithfulness of God the transitory character of suffering and persecution, the power and comfort of faith, &c.

their lives. Our eye, however, is fixed, not on many, but on One; not on the army, but the Leader; not on the servants, but the Lord. We see Jesus only, and from Him we derive our true strength, even as He is our light of life.

There are many witnesses, and yet Jesus only is the true and faithful witness. His witness is also of faith. He is the root, the source, out of which proceeded all the faith of which the eleventh chapter speaks. He is the true Israel, the servant of the Lord, who trusted in God, and by faith glorified the Father who sent Him. As the great Exemplar of Faith, Jesus is set before us; as the Captain of salvation, who is the author and finisher of faith; who is not merely the new and living way, by whom we have access to the Father, but who is the way, that we may walk in Him.

Let us first consider the example of Jesus as the great motive of our obedience of faith, and then look at the nature and method of our Christian race.

By faith Jesus lived, suffered, and died ; on account of His obedience of faith He entered into glory. Here is not merely our righteousness and peace, but this is also the model and strength of our life. Jesus is the way to the Father. By Him we first come ; like Him, and in Him, we who have come must walk ; for Jesus is the first-born among many brethren, and to His image we are to be conformed. Jesus suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. We who know Him as our Saviour know also the fellowship of His sufferings, and the power of His resurrection ; we know Him as the author and finisher of faith. The Lamb who was slain for us is also the Lamb whom we follow ; the cross is both the source and method of our new life.

You who trust in Jesus learn to trust also like Jesus. You who believe in the blood of Christ, and who rejoice in His resurrection, learn as the sons of God to live the life and to be possessed of the spirit of your Head and Lord, your elder Brother. For this purpose has the Father quick-

ened you together with Him, that you should walk as the Son of God also walked—by faith.

Jesus walked by faith. “I will put my trust in God.” This was the description given of Messiah in the prophets. He, who in the eternal counsel undertook our salvation in obedience to the Father’s will, entered by His incarnation on the path of faith. In the eternal counsel of the ever-blessed Triune God, we see not merely the equality of the Son with the Father, but also the voluntary *subordination* of the Son, undertaking our salvation, and becoming according to the divine purpose the Christ, the Head of the Body, entering thus on the relation of the servant: and this mind was in Him, the Son of God, from all eternity, even obedience unto death. Who can comprehend this mystery of divine love! But herein is the very power and efficacy of the obedience of Jesus, that it is the voluntary condescension and obedience of the *Son of God*; and that it is a true and real obedience, submission, dependence, struggle, suffering—that it is the obedience of *faith*.

By faith He walked, looking always unto the Father, and speaking and acting in filial dependence on the Father, and in filial reception out of the Father's fulness. By faith He looked away from all discouragements, difficulties, and oppositions, committing His cause to the Lord, who had sent Him, to the Father, whose will He had come to fulfil. By faith He resisted and overcame all temptation, whether it came from Satan, or from the false Messianic expectations of Israel, or from His own disciples. By faith He performed the signs and wonders, in which the power and love of God's salvation were symbolized. Before He raised Lazarus from the grave, He, in the energy of faith, thanked God, who heard Him alway. And here we are taught the nature of all His miracles. He trusted in God; He gave the command, "Have faith in God," out of the fulness of His own experience.*

* It is equally true and important that Jesus performed miracles, not as Moses and the other servants of God, but *as the Lord*, the Son of God. "My Father worketh hitherto,

As the apostle Peter says, "Jesus went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of devils; for *God was with Him.*" *

The incarnation of the Son of God, His condescension in emptying Himself, was most real and true! He who was rich did really become poor. He who was God's own Son in glory did really empty Himself, and take upon Him the form of a servant. Born of a woman, and made under the law, the Messiah came to do the will of the Father that sent Him. Real were His prayers, the expression of dependence and trust; real was that lifting up of the eyes to the Father above, before Jesus blessed and healed, before He fed the multitude, before He uttered the word of power; real the supplications in the still night before

and I work." The Jews rightly inferred that Jesus made Himself equal with God. Again: "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." Again: Jesus, unlike any mere human prophet, did miracles to manifest forth *His glory.* (John ii. 11.) We must seek the solution of these apparent contradictions in the *Sonship.* Jesus is Son; Jesus is God's Son—filial faith and equality.

* Acts x. 38.

Jesus appointed His apostles ; real the petition, "Glorify Thy Son." Not His own divine omnipotence, but the Father's protection was His strength ; not His own power, but the Scripture promises echoing the eternal promise, were His hope and consolation.

The Lord Jesus *believed*. By faith He rested in the Word of God which was written concerning Him : "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied." He pierced by faith the dense, dark cloud of suffering, ignominy, agony, death, and He beheld the joy set before Him. He knew that Israel would reject Him ; the cross, with all its shame, the scourging, and spitting, and the mockery, all stood before Him ; and yet by faith He added : "And on the third day the Son of man shall rise again from the dead." He who knew that the first part of the 22nd Psalm yet awaited its fulfilment, even His own suffering, believed that the conclusion was also concerning Him. "Thou hast heard me. I will declare Thy name unto my brethren" (faith's family) : "in the

midst of the congregation will I sing praise to Thee." His faith appropriated the words of the 16th Psalm : "I have set the Lord always before me : because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life : in Thy presence is fulness of joy ; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Was it not by faith that on that night, and after having by a glorious and majestic anticipation instituted the memorial of His expiatory death, He sang a hymn of praise ? "The Stone which the builders rejected has become the head corner-stone. This is the Lord's doing, and wondrous in our eyes." In His sufferings, as the apostle Peter writes, "Jesus committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously ;" and His last word was the act of faith : "Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit."

Jesus believed. He is the author and finisher of faith—the only perfect, all-sided embodiment

of faith. Since without faith it is impossible to please God, and since Jesus always and perfectly pleased the Father; since faith is the very root and spirit of obedience, and Jesus was the servant of the Lord, who finished the God-given work, Jesus was perfect in *faith*. In the cloud of witnesses we see faith manifested in scattered fragments, each saint illustrating some aspect, overcoming some difficulty, enduring some test; but Jesus had all faith. The whole realm of faith was traversed by Him; He ascended the whole scale, from the lowest to the highest step: He endured, and He conquered all things. To the end, even unto the death of the cross, He trusted in God.

The joy set before Him was not His motive, but His encouragement. His motive was God's glory, and His love to the Father and to man. Hence we may also say, that the joy set before Him was His motive. For what else is that joy but that the Father is glorified, that His name is declared, that sinners are saved; that the Church,

the body, is gathered ; the Church one with Jesus by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, who came after His ascension ; that the kingdom is established at His appearing, when the Church, the bride, is associated with Him ; that throughout the ages God is all in all ? This joy, anticipated by faith, sustained Him here below ; upon this joy He entered at His resurrection ; this joy is fulfilling itself even now, and is yet awaiting its perfect manifestation and consummation.

Thus by faith He endured the cross, despising the shame. "The cross," the only time in which the word occurs in our epistle as the symbol of *the* obedience, the expiatory sacrifice, the offering up of Himself unto the Father. Who can fathom the depth of His suffering on Golgotha ? The more we think of His divinity, and the more we think of Him as the Son of man, of His infinite and eternal love to the Father, of His most sensitive and perfectly holy humanity, the more we wonder with deep sorrow and contrition, yet with adoring gratitude, that He endured the

cross, despising the shame. Pain and shame were most real to Him—to Jesus, Son of God and Son of man, one person.

Jesus is now at the right hand of the throne of God. You know how the apostle, in harmony with all Scripture, delights in presenting the glory and exaltation of the Saviour as the result and reward of His obedience unto death.*

Who is this glorious One, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come? It is Christ, whom He raised from the *dead*, the man Jesus, who suffered, was crucified, dead and buried.† Who is it that ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things? Who but He that also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?‡ Thus Jesus Himself, before His ascension, declared unto His disciples that all power was *given* unto Him in heaven and on earth; that

* So in Phil. iii., and in the epistle to the Colossians and Ephesians. † Col. i. ‡ Eph. iv.

is, given by the Father unto Him as the incarnate Son, who obeyed the salvation-will of God. It is unto His God and our God, unto His Father and our Father, that Jesus ascends; and when in the heavenly glory He appears unto the beloved disciple, He reveals Himself as the First-begotten of the dead: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."

Jesus, the Messiah, is represented to us in Scripture both as Lord and as servant; both as the King, whom we honour even as we honour the Father, and as the first of worshippers, who in the heavenly glory continually maketh intercession for us. In the book of Revelation, which is the revelation of Jesus Christ in this sense also, that it manifests unto us the glorified Christ, the Saviour speaks emphatically of God as His God. Blessed truth, that He who is the First and the Last, the Only-begotten of the Father, has become the Servant, the Anointed, the Head of the Church; that the Father has *given* Him unto us for ever; that on His throne of glory He identifies Himself

with the brethren, praying with them as well as for them ; that even now He is waiting for His return to us and for His reign with us, even as we are longing for His appearing. In the light of His infinite, eternal divine glory, we behold His marvellous condescension and love. And as the fruit and reward of His obedience we behold His majesty, power, and kingdom.

This truth is full of consolation—full of the most searching and animating consolation. Jesus is our Example; He is our Forerunner; He is the Prototype of all God's saints ; the first-born among many brethren. We also are through suffering to enter into glory. Who would venture to rise to such a conception, had not the Lord Himself, from His throne of exaltation, addressed these words to His churches : “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.”

Learn then that as we are saved *by* faith in Christ crucified, so we are saved *in* the faith of

Jesus, knowing the fellowship of His sufferings. Jesus suffered and died to deliver us from wrath and to give us glory. But Jesus suffered and died, that we should arm ourselves likewise with the same mind ; that choosing to suffer in the flesh, we should cease from sin ; that being chastened of the Lord, we should not be judged ; that by dying daily, we should rejoice in the resurrection power through the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus did indeed suffer, in order that we should not suffer the wrath of God, separation from His presence and the eternal death. But Jesus suffered that we *should* suffer all the pain and struggle, all the loneliness and opposition, all the self-denial and crucifixion, which the flesh must experience when the Spirit of Christ rules and guides. Jesus died to send a sword, to send death to self, sin, the love of the world, nay, to our whole life, as it is of the first Adam. Oh, how sad is it to notice these two inseparable aspects of Christ separated ! Some speaking of Christ as our model, who know not Christ as our Sacrifice and High Priest ; others

again speaking much of Christ's blood and perfect peace, and not remembering that Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. Let us hold fast the simplicity of God's method. In the obedience, sufferings, and death of Jesus we have righteousness and peace, and that first and always; and in them also we have the source, the example, and the strength of our life of faith.

And since the words death and crucifixion, suffering and self-denial, have a gloomy and discouraging sound, let us remember that here is nothing legal, hard, impossible, or even uncertain. All real bitterness was tasted in our stead by Jesus. The light of resurrection shines into our hearts, *even while we mortify the members which are upon earth.* The peace of God and the sympathy of Jesus uphold us, even while we offer up Isaac, our only son. The assurance of the Father's unchanging love, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, bring us joy, even while we groan in this our tabernacle, being burdened, and while we feel the

presence and power of sin and temptation. Our blessedness is not in that we mourn, but in that even now Christ is our consolation. We are indeed sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing. We show the death of the Lord ; but it is in a feast, the banquet of love and joy. For He died that we should henceforth truly live, and we hear the words, "Till I come."

(II.) There is a race set before us. Every human life may be viewed as a race, even as every human life may be compared with a fight. There is, however, a good fight of faith, and there is a bad fight against and without faith. So there is the race which the world sets before us, which our own ambition chooses, and which we run in our own unrenewed energy—and there is the race set before us of God, on which we enter when we give our hearts to Jesus, and hear from His lips the words of majesty and love—"Follow Me." The one race appeals to us in our natural state : animated by merely human, if not sinful motives, and pursuing earthly methods, we may reach the goal—a crown

of fading leaves; but in the God-appointed race all is of God—heavenly, spiritual, and eternal. The prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus is the crown, immortal and unfading, the inheritance of light and blessedness, the throne of Jesus Himself, who will associate with Himself the disciples, who have overcome and finished their course. The method and laws of the race are the words of Jesus abiding in the heart, the mind of Christ implanted by the Holy Ghost. The strength and energy of the race is the influence, faith-renewing, which the Lord sends unto all that wait upon Him. The race is set before us of God, and God renews our strength to run the race.

It is a race; hence constancy, stedfastness, perseverance are absolutely necessary. He that endureth to the end shall be saved. Many, like the Galatians, run well at first, rejoicing in the liberty of the gospel, and with enthusiastic love receiving the messenger of peace; but they are soon hindered and turned aside. Many who at first and immediately rejoice, and perhaps owing

to the very absence of sorrow, contrition, and self-distrust, soon fall away, because they have no root.

It is a race, and therefore requires concentration of purpose, singleness of aim, and self-restraint : they who have determined to gain the prize lay aside every burden, and free themselves from every entanglement. They need no exhortation to do so. Of their own accord they lay aside everything that hinders. This points out the necessity (must I say also the difficulty?) of sincerity and singleness of heart. Jesus says, "One thing is needful." May the heart respond, "One thing I ask of the Lord ;" and the life, "One thing I do." Every weight, the burden of cares and difficulties, of earthly plans and self-chosen toil, must be laid aside ; and that sin of unbelief, which is always within and about us, always obstructing our progress, clouding our view, paralysing our energy, and above all lessening our love. Is not faith victory? Is not unbelief defeat?*

* Whereas weight designates everything that hinders, though in itself not wrong, the apostle proceeds to mention sin, designating it by a word which occurs nowhere else

The apostle asks us to lay aside every weight, and the besetting sin, as if we could do it, and could do it easily. "Lay aside," he says, "these useless and hurtful things; leave them behind." It is easy, when we look unto Jesus; but impossible unless our thoughts and affections are centred in Christ—unless we behold Him as our Lord and Bridegroom, our strength and joy. This is the only method of the new covenant. We are not under the law, but under grace. It is not by introspection, by self-discipline, by attempting first to lay aside our weight and our sin, that we gain the victory. These things do not precede the look unto Jesus. It is the light which dispels the darkness; it is the love of Jesus which separates

(*ἐξεπλοτατον*), and which seems to mean, coming in our way, standing round us, obstructing us in our progress. To refer the word to unbelief is in harmony with the whole argument and with the whole epistle. (iii. 12.) The words of Owen appear to me to express it most concisely: "It is the nature of indwelling sin, at such seasons, to work by unbelief towards a departure from the living God or the relinquishment of the gospel."

us from the world; it is the grace of Christ that delivers us from all fear and doubt.

Thus the apostle describes his own experience.* His only object is to win Christ, and to be found in Him. His constant desire is to know Christ in His fulness, and the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of His resurrection, being made conformable unto His death. Starting with Jesus, he entered the race; looking unto Him, walking with Him, he desired to finish his course. Christ is the end of the way, and the way itself.

"Look away" unto Jesus: averting our eyes from the difficulties before us. The difficulties of our path are great; we know and feel them; we must look at them, but we must then look away from them unto Jesus. Like Abraham, we must not consider the obstacles and even impossibilities; we must not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief. We are not to be insensible in sorrow and trial; we are not to forget our cares; but feeling the weight of our cares, cast them upon the

* Phil. iii.

Lord: rejoicing in Him, we may be delivered from all painful anxiety. Stoicism enables men to endure, but the heart is hardened, and still more estranged from God. Looking off unto Jesus, the difficulties and trials of our path only accelerate our progress and deepen our peace.

What is the secret of holiness, peacefulness, and strength, but to have no will, separate from and prior to the will of God? To run the race God sets before us, to walk in the *good works* foreordained by divine wisdom and love. It is one thing to ask, What good thing should *I* like to do for God? Here self is still choosing, and we please and serve after all ourselves. But to ask, like Saul, beholding the divine Master, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" is the beginning of true separation to God. If we run the race set before us, engaging in duties God-appointed and not self-chosen, and bestowing all our energies, and that cheerfully, on the God-appointed tasks and sorrows, then may we rest in full assurance that our strength shall

never fail, that our fruit shall remain,* that our life shall, though apparently fragmentary, be complete, that we shall reach the end, and be counted faithful in that day.

“Run with patience.” Always remembering that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy; that he that believeth shall not make haste, that the race is not to the swift;† but learning the divine paradox, that they that *wait* on the Lord *run*, and are not weary. We have the example of the prophets ‡ in patience or endurance, and above all of our blessed Lord. This endurance (in which faith shows its meekness as well as strength) is the great characteristic of the *saints*, the followers of the Lamb. Here also is wisdom. He who gives up self rejoices in God, and he who has died to this present world anticipates the joy of the heavenly kingdom. Experience teaches us that there is an unreal and unfruitful way of speaking of heaven and the future glory, when

* John xv. 16. † Eccles. ix. 11. ‡ James v.

we forget that Jesus Himself is the heaven we expect ; and that we have received even now the earnest pledge and foretaste of our inheritance. Oh, how much of heaven may we not have even now ! for are we not even at present the sons of God ? and beholding Jesus, are we not even now to be like Him ? It is not so much our sufferings, our infirmities, or our trials which separate us from the joy to come, as sin, and above all unbelief. For if a man love Jesus, will not the Father and the Son come and take up their abode in him ?

