

Striking Incidents in the LIFE of MOSES

"HE WROTE OF ME"

(John 5: 46)



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Thirty Cents

FOREWORD

Some years ago there appeared in "Help and Food" a series of papers which, while furnishing some of its substance, suggests the present work.

Let it be understood, however, that this is in nowise an exposition of the writings of Moses, nor of any of the five books of which he is the author. Neither is it an attempted "Life of Moses." It is rather an endeavor to look into some of those outstanding occasions in his amazing career wherein his faith is so strikingly evidenced.

Those occasions are so varied that it is impossible to consider them without searching of heart. Few of us can do so without at least finding one that fits into our lives in a way that reveals the secrets of the heart and makes us fall upon our knees in the presence of God.

It is therefore intended to consider them in an historical way, especially in their practical bearing upon our lives. For if thus considered, they are bound to promote exercises of heart that are helpful to a walk with God, a walk which HE so greatly desires us to enjoy.

However, we shall not overlook features in them which are "typical," especially where the New Testament so treats of them.

STRIKING INCIDENTS in the LIFE OF MOSES

Conditions in Egypt

Four hundred and thirty years before the law is given to the children of Israel, the promises of God are made to Abraham and to his seed. Thus a period of four hundred and thirty years lies between the time in which God makes His covenant with Abraham and the time when Moses, "the servant of God," legislates for Israel in the wilderness. Such is the statement of the Holy Ghost in Galatians 3: 17.

In the first century of their sojourn in Egypt, the children of Israel enjoy extraordinary favor under the sway of the Hyksos, or shepherd kings. These latter had in an earlier day come from Phoenicia and the coasts of Canaan, and established themselves on the throne of Lower Egypt, forcing the ancient dynasty of that land to content itself with the throne of Upper Egypt in the south. But sometime after the death of Joseph the ancient race succeeded in driving out the aliens in Lower Egypt, and in re-uniting the kingdom.

It is this re-conquest of northern (called Lower) Egypt that explains the sentence: "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, *which knew not Joseph*" (Exod. 1: 8). He had no personal acquaintance with Joseph (who died 64 years before the birth of Moses), nor did he know Joseph in the sense in which, for instance, Americans know George Washington or Abraham Lincoln; he had no link nor sympathy with the wise Hebrew

whose labors not only benefited his brethren, but rendered incalculable advantage to the dynasty lately expelled by force of arms.

Consequently the "new king" discovering in the recovered territory a thriving colony of aliens with features not unlike those of the vanquished Hyksos, now settled in Philistia, alleged that in the event of war they might be his undoing by joining forces with the enemy. His way of putting it is: "Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get themselves up out of the land" (Exod. 1: 10). This proposal, however, is not the merely shrewd, and perhaps ruthless, move of a far-seeing statesman, let us say, of the Bismarck type, who might scheme to consolidate his Fatherland. That does not properly state the case before us. The king's proposal reveals him as a man of an evil mind. One phrase in it unmasks him by its disclosure of his policy, namely, that in the event of war they may "get them up out of the land." It is not that he conceives of their presence in his dominions as a potential menace of which he will gladly be rid. At the moment he has no such fears, and as for the future he will deal with it upon arrival. It is not that he wishes to see their exodus in the interests of harmony; on the contrary, he will prevent such a thing by force of arms, and he will do so for an evil purpose. And as he has already discovered they are an unarmed people, engaged in the peaceful pursuits of cattle-raising and sheep-farming, and in no position to resist his will, he will enslave them.

Judge then of the anguish of this unoffending people when they learn that their new rulers are to be slaveholders on a racial scale, and they are to be the enslaved race. And as the slave system planned in the

brains of their masters goes into effect, we may conceive of their despair as they contemplate the outlook. They are to be toilers "in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field." They are to furnish Pharaoh with the material and labor for the erection of "treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses," in Goshen, where they reside. But what sort of cities are these? *The Numerical Bible* says "store cities;" explaining this as "cities whence Pharaoh may provision his troops." Thus a race of slaves are to erect in Goshen vast depots of war munitions that will be guarded by the troops of the oppressor. These will furnish supplies not merely to contend with foreign powers, but to hold in perpetual slavery the builders thereof. As another remarks: They are not only compelled to forge their own chains, but to rivet them upon their persons.

Nevertheless the more the Egyptians afflict these people, the more they multiply and grow. They are a virile race, they increase in strength.

And now the day arrives which the king may have anticipated. Thinks he: May not this people, whom I had hoped to reduce to helpless servility, inflict a damaging blow at some unguarded spot in my kingdom, possibly when I am engaged in a foreign war? And as one sin leads to another, he issues an edict legalizing infant murder as a state policy so far as the children of Israel are concerned. He will weaken this sturdy and growing race by the murder of their infant sons, while permitting the daughters to live. The edict is as follows. Addressing the midwives, Shiprah and Puah, he orders: "When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live." No doubt the king intends this policy to continue in force so long as he thinks it neces-

sary to his plans. Such then are conditions in Egypt at the period we are considering.

But let us remember that God had foretold this to Abraham three centuries earlier (Gen. 15: 5-21). And He is watching every move in the awful drama, not one of which will get beyond control. On the contrary, He will see that every happening serves His purpose and works together for the good of the people among whom He intends to tabernacle.

It is at this time that Moses is born. And it is in him that we are to see the faith that will become the medium through which God will magnify His name while accomplishing the deliverance of the people whom He has chosen.

A Good Start

While the lives of the children of Israel are being embittered by bondage, and after an edict has come from Pharaoh that all males of the enslaved race are to be destroyed at birth, a son is born to Amram, who has married Jochebed, both being Levites (Exod. 6: 20). The parents having faith to discern that he is "a proper child" ("proper to God," see *margin*), disregard the king's mandate, and hide him for three months. But unable to conceal him longer, his mother puts him afloat on the Nile in an ark of bulrushes daubed with slime and pitch, whence he is rescued by Pharaoh's daughter who, accompanied by her maidens, has come down to the river to bathe. However, the child's sister on the watch, overhearing the words, "This is one of the Hebrews' children," spoken compassionately by the royal lady as "the babe wept," offers to secure a Hebrew nurse and, obtaining permission, fetches the mother, who is engaged at wages to nurse the babe.

In this intervention for the child's deliverance, with

its far-reaching consequences, we may see one of the most striking examples of divine providence in the history of mankind. It appears too as if it serves the purpose of annulling the monstrous mandate of infant murder; at any rate we hear no more of it.

After his weaning and early life, he is brought to the abode of Pharaoh's daughter, who names him *Moses*, which means "Drawn out." In this way the growing boy is continually reminded by his very name of the providence that has interposed on his behalf and, like another of whom we read in the Gospels, it is possible that in this story he hears something which he *keeps* in his heart. But of his early life we only know that his education is thoroughly attended to; for sixteen centuries later Stephen tells us that he was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7: 22). These words portray the young man as a scholar, a councillor of weight, and a man of affairs, perhaps of military skill. Thus we see in him a splendid—we might say, a finished—specimen of a highly polished civilization. However, we learn later that, at the age of eighty, after forty years' desert experience, he reveals himself as a silent man, "not eloquent" but of a "slow tongue," one averse to contact with people (Exod. 4: 10-13).

We believe, however, that slow-speaking Moses is better furnished to do the kind of work laid out for him during the last forty years of his life than he would have been had he the tongue of a ready speaker like his fluent brother Aaron.

Moses, however, knowing his kinship with Israel, doubtless often deplores their condition and wonders how he can lighten their burdens. It may be natural for him to suppose that his adoption by Pharaoh's daughter indicates the divine method of placing him

where he can exercise influence on their behalf. And this might be correct were it God's purpose to leave them in Egypt, but it is not His intention. Therefore at the age of forty, faith leads him to relinquish the position wherein providence has placed him; he *refuses* "to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Heb. 11: 21). In this it is evident he is beginning to appraise values, he is getting his eyes opened; he is beginning to see things as they really are. It is of course certain that he does not yet realize all that is involved in the step he takes; but God, who does, reveals it in the words: "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11: 25, 26).

Having reached this decision, it comes "into his heart" to visit his brethren the children of Israel; and seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defends him and slays the oppressive Egyptian, concealing his body in the sand (Acts 7: 23, 24). On the next day, however, he witnesses a quarrel that urges him to attempt the making of peace between *brethren*. But he finds this to be more difficult than killing an Egyptian, the aggressor in the dispute saying: "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?" Hence, realizing that his actions are causing unfavorable comment, and that Pharaoh plans to slay him, he abandons the endeavor to deliver Israel, and flees to the land of Midian. Commenting upon this episode, and informing us of the thoughts passing through Moses' mind at this time, Stephen says he "supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not" (Acts 7: 25). They have no conception of the purpose that brings him from the king's court to their side.

However, if the children of Israel are not ready to be delivered, it is evident that Moses, although he has "the root of the matter" in him, has much to learn before he can serve them as effectively as God desires, hence his flight is overruled for good, for it places him where he can learn to advantage what he needs to know.

Nevertheless, as his decision to renounce Egypt's treasures for God's interests is described (in Hebrews 11) as apart from fleshly admixture, so is his renunciation of Egypt described as the fearless act of one whose eye is upon God. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." This summary omits any reference to his failure in Egypt, or to the sojourn in Midian, and passes from his decision at forty to his call at eighty; for God, who reads the intention of the heart and knows the end from the beginning, accredits at the outset all He perceives to be involved in the "good start" His servant makes when he refuses to be called "the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

Training in Secret

Soldiers are trained for action far from the field of battle. Awkward youths are drilled where no hostile eye looks on. Perhaps this training may appear unnecessarily severe to the "raw recruits," but the result justifies the methods of the drill instructor. Thus it is that Moses is removed to a place where he is trained to do battle in God's way. As a wise man observes: "He is forty years in Egypt learning to be something; forty years in the desert learning to be nothing; and forty years in the wilderness proving God to be everything." Thus after his premature endeavor to serve his brethren, he learns in the desert, and further at "the burning bush," what fits him for the commission: "Come

now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (Exod. 3: 10).

But to return. Let us observe that upon his arrival in Midian he is ready for anything that requires attention. He might have wasted his time in blaming others for his failure, but he does not; on the contrary, he is ready as ever to "do his bit." Sitting by a well in the new country, he discovers there is service to be rendered there. For he sees the daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, driven off by the shepherds who monopolize the troughs filled by the labor of these women. So he stands up and helps them and waters their flock. And it is this service that introduces him to Jethro, who welcomes him to his home, finds him employment and, in due course, gives him Zipporah to be his wife.

We now see him in the solitude of the desert engaged as a shepherd for forty years. This may seem an unnecessarily long period, but it will be found that when the proper time arrives, things move according to divine schedule. In the meantime "the iniquity of the Amorites" becomes "full," and Israel becomes ready for emancipation.

Referring to the long-continued training of Moses, let us quote a narrative from William Barker's "Waters of Quietness," cited, we believe, from the writings of Sir Edward Denny.

Porporo, one of the most illustrious masters of music in Italy, conceived a friendship for a young pupil, and asked him if he had courage to persevere . . . in the course he should mark out for him. . . . When the pupil answered in the affirmative, Porporo wrote upon a single page of ruled paper the diatonic and chromatic scales, ascending and descending, the intervals of the third, fourth, and fifth, etc. This page occupied both the master and scholar during

an entire year; and the year following was also devoted to it. When the third year commenced, nothing was said of changing the lesson and the pupil began to murmur; but the master reminded him of his promise. The fourth year slipped away; the fifth followed, and always the same eternal page. The sixth found them at the same task; but the master added to it some lessons of articulation, pronunciation, and lastly, declamation. At the end of the year, the pupil, who supposed himself still in the elements, was surprised when one day his master said to him: "Go, my son, you have no more to learn. You are the first singer of Italy, and of the world." He spoke the truth, for the singer was Caffarelli.

Thus the thorough training of Moses, the long seasons of silence, the exceptional opportunities for meditation and prayer, formed in him the habit of continual reference of heart to God. And at a later day it is apparent he has learned his lesson for, as problems arise in Israel, he solves them because he has God's point of view.

His Commission

At last the day arrives when God judges him fit for service in Egypt. Hence at Mount Horeb He addresses him out of the "burning bush." What a moment has come! In the backside of the desert, attending to the flock of Jethro, he arrives at the "mountain of God," where the angel of the Lord appears to him in a flame of fire glowing in the midst of a bush which remains unconsumed. Such "a great sight" arrests his course and secures his attention. Hence "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off the shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exod. 3: 5). Whereupon He tells Moses that He has been watching the affliction

of His people and heard their cry, and has come down to deliver them.

The Hebrew word for this bush is *seneh*, meaning a *thorn-bush*, such as are found in the desert. Thorns are the sign of the curse upon creation; and an observer tells us they are "abortive" leaves that refuse to open and fulfil their purpose, becoming a menace instead. Thus the bush which Moses sees describes man as alienated from God and an enemy. And although the children of Israel are about to be redeemed and manifested as belonging to God, yet are they of the same fallen stock as the nations. Nevertheless the flame among them does not destroy but purifies. The furnace of affliction, while instrumentally kindled by Pharaoh, is both limited and overruled by Jehovah, just as the persecution of the church in Smyrna, although provoked by the "devil," is foretold by the Lord, confined within a restricted period of time, and used for purifying purposes (Rev. 2:10). The day has therefore arrived when Moses is to understand that God is in control of all that is transpiring among His people; the flame is not to remind him of the malignant power of Pharaoh, but of the disciplining power of God. It is the realization of the "smoking furnace" of Genesis 15:17. Darkness had produced drowsiness and "deep sleep" in the watchful Abraham, but the "burning lamp" passing between the "pieces" of the sacrifice, revealed the vigilance of God on behalf of a redeemed people as He purifies them by tribulation. Similarly, Moses has impressed upon him the holiness and compassion of God, who says: "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt" (Exod. 3:10).

But he who had pressed forward forty years earlier, now draws back, saying: "Who am I that I should go

unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Alas, the flesh seen in forwardness may equally reveal itself in backwardness. The former may *seem* to be the greater evil because it brings its trouble in hand, while the latter may not make room for it until later. Yet to His timid servant, God encouragingly says: "Certainly I will be with thee." Still he demurs. Whereupon God reminds him that he bears a message from the I AM, the eternal self-existent One; and therefore opposition must give way before that message. But as he is looking at himself rather than God, he fears failure. Such is man. We remember hearing a brother remark: "When Elijah got his eye upon Jezebel he fled!" But another said: "When Elijah got his eye *upon himself*, he fled; because he measured himself against Jezebel!" Thus instead of counting entirely upon God, Moses measures himself against the supposed unbelief of his brethren, saying: "They will not believe, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." Yet God had said: "*They shall hearken* to thy voice."

Credentials

At this juncture God furnishes His servant with credentials to his brethren. "And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And He said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: *that they may believe* that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee" (Exod. 4: 1-5). The lesson intended is that as the "rod" represents

human power or ability to perform, that ability is seen under satanic control "on the ground." But God speaks words of deliverance, and Moses obeys those words, whereupon the rod is restored to him; but henceforth it is called the "rod of God," signifying the recovery of man under divine control (Exod. 4: 20).

Again Moses receives another sign. He is commanded to put his hand into his bosom; he does so and withdraws it leprous; the bosom as the fountain of man's being *manifesting its defilement in the hand*. But we read: "Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh." Thus, as someone says, we may see in the exposed leprous hand, *the sin confessed*, and where there is confession there is cleansing (1 John 1: 9).

But Moses is also told to take of the water of the river and pour it upon the ground, and it becomes blood; for the "river," as representing Egypt's source of life, is thus demonstrated to be subject to death. That this is the significance of the river is seen in the fact that Egypt is a fertile land which owes its existence to the Nile which, once a year overflowing its banks, deposits a double strip of the rich soil it carries from interior Africa in its flow towards the sea. The rain which comes down upon the distant sources of the great river is not seen in Egypt, which is almost a rainless country. And although it would perish without those unseen rains which cause the overflow that enriches their land, its people fail to recognize this. Therefore they render divine honors to the river itself, ignoring the heavens. However, in this sign, God shows that all it represents is subject to death.

In all this we may learn that the servant's credentials are not human advantages nor an official status, but

the experimental knowledge of divine power and grace. He gains a hearing among men because he can speak to them as (1) delivered from Satan's rule and as subject to the authority of God in grace; as (2) having no confidence in the flesh but glorying in the cross; and as (3) realizing that the world system of things is subject to death and judgment.

Moses, however, notwithstanding the credentials furnished, persists in his hesitancy, saying: "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant (since yesterday, nor since the third day): but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue" (Exod. 4: 10). But Jehovah says: "Who made man's mouth?" and adds: "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." He urges him forward. Such are indeed the ways of God with His hesitant servants in all ages. J. B. Stoney illustrates it as follows. A horse is led to a barrier which he must leap, but he shies. However, the rider knows what the horse can do; so at proper intervals he brings it to the barrier urging it to leap, until one day the noble creature leaps it beautifully. The rider has his way.

But Moses refuses to make a move. He replies: "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send." That is to say, I would prefer it if you send someone else, but if you insist that I go, of course I shall have to go! This answer so provokes the Lord that He allows his brother Aaron to become his mouthpiece, saying: "I know he can speak well." Yes, God is aware of the existence of good speakers, but He is more desirous of securing the services of slow-speaking Moses than fluent Aaron; He wants one who will do what he is told, rather than one who is ready with words. And however useful Aaron may become (we do

not speak of his typical significance), there can be no doubt that God foresees danger that can be avoided if Moses steps forward obediently. Moreover, if "good speaking" consists in the proper use of the plainest language, who is there among the sons of men who expresses himself more plainly than the author of the Pentateuch? Where is there to be found language comparable in strength with the Mosaic account of creation, so convincingly stated that it baffled the nineteenth century resuscitation of the ancient philosophy of evolution? While some scientists permitted themselves to be misrepresented by philosophers, the Mosaic account of creation actually wore out by its force of utterance the guesses that are now receiving their quietus at the hand of "science," properly so called, as it arrives at exact knowledge and is being greeted by Moses with the "revelation of prior knowledge." And may we not therefore ask: Who could have excelled him in "speaking" had he but trusted the Creator of man's mouth? Would He not have unloosed His servant's tongue in so far as it suited His purpose?

However, despite the unbelief that grieves Him, God shows His pleasure in the "faith" that underlies it and will manifest itself by-and-by. Therefore He communicates His orders to Moses rather than to Aaron, the latter receiving them from the former, who is to be to him "instead of God." The matter now settled in this way, Moses informs his father-in-law of his intended departure and, getting his consent, takes his wife and two sons, setting out toward Egypt.

We are now reminded in a startling way that God will have faithfulness in the home. Thus it comes to pass "by the way, in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him," evidently choosing a time and place that, while emphasizing His righteousness, suits His pur-

pose in other ways—as we shall see. “Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision” (Exod. 4: 24-26). Evidently there has been discord in the home. It would appear that Zipporah has been opposing the circumcision of her *son*—it does not say “sons.” Probably the firstborn has been circumcised, but there seems to have been objection raised to the circumcision of the youngest, Moses yielding the point for the sake of peace. Nevertheless, as he is accountable to God in the matter, it is he who is imperilled for neglect of the divine ordinance. This his wife realizes and is forced to perform the rite herself, her husband being helpless, yet does so angrily at God’s insistence upon obedience. But by this episode Moses is compelled to realize the inadvisability of bringing Zipporah with him to Egypt, and has her sent back to the shelter of her father’s house. It seems obvious that in a providential way God compels this arrangement. Through his strict insistence upon obedience in the home, He shows that Zipporah’s presence in Egypt at this time would be a hindrance to the work intended. Thus He *helps* His servant to re-arrange his plans in a way that turns out for the best, inasmuch as it permits him to give undivided attention to the work he is called upon to do.

Moses now resumes his journey, and meets his brother at Mount Horeb, who is genuinely glad to see him. Evidently God, who has prompted the journey of Aaron, has stirred him to greet his long-absent brother with marked affection. Indeed, He had assured Moses of this, saying: “He cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee *he will be glad in his heart.*” One might ask: Why should such a natural reunion be prophesied?

Might it not be expected? But may it not suggest that Moses' interference with slave conditions prior to his flight had only served to embitter the lot of Israel, and particularly that of his family? And may not Aaron, a man of diplomacy, have bitterly resented what he would call a rash act that could not possibly succeed, and could only provoke retaliation by Pharaoh, and an increase of the sufferings of Israel? It appears then that God endeavors to put "heart" into a discouraged man by the guarantee of a warm brotherly embrace. And a little later He gives further encouragement, saying: "Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life." Hence after the greeting alluded to, and after mutual confidences, the brothers accompany each other to Egypt and gather "all the elders of the children of Israel," to whom "Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. *And they believed, and bowed their heads and worshipped.*"

However, God warns Moses that although He will perform wonders before Pharaoh, the latter will not (at first) let the people go. There will therefore be a protracted campaign in which Jehovah will judge "the gods of Egypt," subjugate proud Pharaoh, and ultimately emancipate the people of His choice. But He will take His own time in the matter, and His people will have to exercise patience while He works out His purpose.

At this time the whole world is in the toils of idolatry, Pharaoh occupying an important position at one of the most influential centres of this challenge of the rights of God. Thus we read: "The scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout the earth" (Rom. 9: 17). Therefore, His judgment of "all the gods of Egypt" will

serve as a great lesson for all who are willing to learn. And it will encourage His people to take a firm stand for Him in the midst of the heathen. These judgments will also prove of value in weakening the opposition of the warlike nations whom they must encounter later. We know He thus uses the triumph at the Red Sea, His servant Moses saying: "The people shall hear and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold of the inhabitants of Palestina" (Exod. 15: 14-18). And Rahab the harlot says: "We have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt . . . and our hearts did melt" (Josh. 2: 9-11). We may be sure that the entire system of plagues poured upon Egypt is intended not only to impress the inhabitants of that land but to prepare the surrounding nations for the assertion of Jehovah's claims as the Leader of His people.

But let us consider a matter that has occasioned much controversy, namely, the disclosure that God, in His dealings with the proud monarch, "*will harden his heart*, that he shall not let the people go" (Exod. 4: 21).

Let it then be noted that God foreknows what men will do. He knows that Pharaoh will harden his own heart against the divine overtures; that he is a conscienceless individual who will promise anything when in trouble, but will take his own way when pressure is removed. He also knows Pharaoh as a very proud man, for "the proud he knoweth *afar off*" (Ps. 138: 6). In the nature of things, such a man is bound to get into conflict with God, who "resisteth the proud" (Jas. 4: 6).

We may now turn our attention to the first movement in the conflict about to begin. To the command that Pharaoh permit Israel to go into the wilderness and hold a feast unto Jehovah, he insolently replies by repudiating Him as, to him, an UNKNOWN. He hardens

his heart against the divine command and declares he has no intention of obeying it.

Yet even after this defiance is hurled at the Almighty, he becomes self-hardened *increasingly*. For the divine warnings and commands, as well as respites between plagues, not producing submission in Pharaoh, only increase the hardness of his heart. "Resistance" to the will of God hardens the heart as nothing else will. It is the knowledge of this fact that has led to the coining of the awful but true phrase, "Gospel-hardened sinner," even although we know that, when obeyed, the gospel breaks hard hearts and binds up broken ones..

We have thus seen that the rejecter of God's testimony becomes hardened by resisting it. Indeed, we are told that those who refuse to hear "Moses and the prophets"—the Word of God—will not be persuaded by the testimony of one raised from the dead (Luke 16: 31). We may therefore say: How hardened must they be who reject the appeal of the entire canon of Scripture—Moses, the Prophets, the Psalms, the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Revelation!

But is this *self*-hardening the whole truth of the matter in question? Is this all God means when He says: "I will harden his heart that he shall not let the people go?"

On three occasions it is affirmed that "Pharaoh hardened his heart," namely, after the plagues of "frogs," of "flies," and of "hail." The Scriptures declare most plainly that Pharaoh hardened his own heart:—all true. But they just as plainly declare that "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart." Do both declarations mean the same thing? Would not God adhere to the same form of language respecting this matter did He intend to convey this meaning? Why in some instances should God attribute this hardening to Pharaoh's act and in others to His own?

On this matter let us quote some remarks of the late J. Urquhart.

It will be quite clear that the explanation must go further [than a reference to self-hardening] if it is to satisfy. . . . Pharaoh did harden his own heart, and as a fit reward for that God hardened his heart when the man, left to himself, would have quailed before the terrors of coming judgment. There have been men, and there have been nations, who have sinned so deeply that, if they were permitted to turn and flee just as they caught a glimpse of advancing judgment, God would be lacking in justice, and the terrible things by which He has avenged earth's wrongs would never have been done. They went so far in the way of oppression, right in the teeth of conscience and of men's remonstrances. God pleaded with them to refrain, to repent, and to flee from the way of death; but they would not hear. They went on. The oppression deepened. The cry of anguish went up with tenfold strength to heaven. God stood in the way again. Again He pleaded. Again He threatened. But the living God, the Judge of all the earth, was thrust aside, just because He came not in judgment but in mercy. They hardened their hearts and went on, and dyed their hands still more blackly in crime. . . . And now, when God bares His arm for judgment, and the cowards would flee from their fitting rewards, God says: 'No: you would not turn when I implored you to flee; you persisted in sowing iniquity; you watered it with the tears and the blood of your victims: and now ye shall reap the harvest.' And so, to them who have hardened their hearts again and again in defiance of God, *there comes a time when God hardens their hearts*, that they may go further still and reap the just reward of their deeds.

Thus self-hardening is followed by *judicial* hardening. Christendom is going to experience this by-and-by. In indignation at those who would not believe the truth

because they "found pleasure" in unrighteousness, who would not receive "the love of the truth" that they might be saved, God will send "a working of error, that they should believe what is false, that they might be judged" (2 Thess. 2: 11, *New Trans.*).

However, we are now to witness the opening of the divine campaign for the deliverance of Israel. For we are told that Moses and Aaron "went in" to Pharaoh; no doubt into an audience chamber where deputations waited upon him. We may envision these representatives of an enslaved race breaking all precedent as, in the dignity of their commission, they wend their way past astonished courtiers and lay upon the monarch in firm yet respectful terms the divine command: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness" (Exod. 5: 1). But with scorn Pharaoh expresses ignorance of, if not contempt for, Jehovah; and disregards His message. And although they expostulate with him, he brushes aside their pleas in the manner of a slave-owner, branding them as agitators who are spoiling the *morale* of his workers; and finally says to themselves: "Get you unto your burdens." Thus rebuffed they pass out of the royal presence, no doubt abashed at the seeming failure of their endeavor, and stared at mockingly.

In the meantime, Pharaoh sensing in this appeal the beginning of an agitation of unrest, takes measures to nip it in the bud. Therefore, he issues an order obliging their officers (who are Hebrews) to furnish no more straw to the workers; that they must gather their own straw, but supply the same number of bricks as heretofore. Unable to do so, the officers are flogged; so much so that, ignoring Moses and Aaron, they complain directly to the throne of its unreasonable demands, only to be told that the workers are idle and the new edict

is unalterable. And although Moses and Aaron, with sad hearts, await their exit, they are merely blamed as bunglers who have increased the burdens of Israel.

However, they are again directed to approach the king, and this time to demonstrate by miracle the character of their mission. Hence Aaron casts down his rod before Pharaoh and it becomes a "serpent." The magicians of Egypt are able to imitate this miracle "by their enchantments," however. But Aaron's rod "swallowed up their rods."

Pharaoh's object in calling the magicians is evidently to ascertain whether Aaron's action is by divine power or by magical art. But by this time it is manifest that the sign of Egypt's enslavement by Satan, as illustrated in the miracle, fails to impress Pharaoh. He has seemingly persuaded himself that the "miracle" is merely a magical deception, the secret of which is unknown to his magicians. Therefore he refuses to let Israel go. And it is this attitude that is now going to bring upon the land judgments that are manifestly of God's appointment; judgments that are now household terms, even "the plagues of Egypt."

The Plagues of Egypt

The First Plague. Attended by his servants as he comes down to the river in the morning, Pharaoh is accosted by Moses, reminded of God's command which he has thus far disobeyed, and warned of impending judgment—in vain. After which, "The Lord spoke unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone.

And Moses and Aaron did so" (Exod. 7: 19-25). The Nile, Egypt's source of life, and worshipped as a deity, is turned into blood. Its fish die. The river stinks. And "the waters of Egypt," its pools, ponds, rivers and streams, furnish blood instead of drinking-water. In the meantime the magicians by their "enchantments" increase the evil they are unable to remove. The entire nation now frantically digs round about the river, as near the surface as possible, in search of whatever brackish water may remain disconnected from the polluted currents. Thus the judgments of Jehovah upon "the gods of Egypt" begin at the *river*. The king, however, remains unyielding, and goes "into his house" to console himself as best he can, possibly trying to persuade himself that this fearful state of things can be accounted for by secrets of magic thus far unearthed by his wise men.

The Second Plague. Again is Pharaoh warned that if he refuses to let Israel go, God will smite all his borders "with frogs." As he is obdurate, Moses tells Aaron to stretch out his hand with his rod "over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt." They emerge abundantly. They enter the palace and penetrate its inner recesses. Pharaoh's very bed harbors them. The loathsome things swarm in every house; they are found in their ovens and kneading-troughs. Every source of refreshment now vomits uncleanness. And the magicians only increase the vileness. At last the king, unable to endure it longer, seeks relief from the God whose existence he has been scouting, and begs Moses and Aaron to supplicate Jehovah on his behalf, promising obedience to His demands. Relief is granted. The frogs cease coming. Those already covering the land die, their corpses being piled in heaps, while the land stinks. But

when the infatuated monarch sees that relief is granted, he refuses to let Israel go, even with the stench of the plague in his nostrils.

It is alleged that in Egypt the frog was revered as the symbol of *productiveness*, or fruitfulness. Ptah was represented with a frog's head. Hence any attempt to kill a frog was regarded as sacrilege. What then must be their disgust as they are compelled to witness the "productiveness" of the object of their veneration. How manifestly is God judging "the gods of Egypt."

The Third Plague. Moses tells Aaron to stretch out his rod and smite the dust of the land, "and it became lice [or gnats] in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt" (Exod. 8: 17). The king, his family, his friends, his servants, his army, his navy, all the people rich or poor, are unable to protect themselves from these pests. It is said that the Egyptians paid particular attention to their persons, bathing and shaving regularly. And we are informed that the priests were scrupulously clean, as they would be unfitted to perform their duties were vermin found upon them. With what alarm then must they have discovered that each particle of dust has become a living thing, and that lice are lodging themselves in their persons. And great must have been their despair when they discover that in the superb temples of Middle Egypt, Onuphis and Basis are restive, although venerated as sacred bulls. What must it be in On, where Mnevis, a deified bull and sacred to the sun, exhibits the same symptoms of restiveness and, upon examination, discloses the same cause. And with what humiliation must the splendidly-garbed high-priest of Apis in the city of Memphis (himself tormented by the vermin), discover that his god, the bull-deity who is the type of the sun, and type of the "infinite invisible," is writhing

in the discomfort of the third plague visited upon "the gods of Egypt." Authorities assure us that this plague must have closed the temples, as no official act could be performed under such conditions.

In their petty way the magicians attempt to imitate this plague also, but they discover that they cannot; they are baffled. It may be that there is no room for magical deception in particles of dust; that nothing but a genuine impartation of life avails now, and that it is being demonstrated, what Lord Kelvin points out thirty-five hundred years later, that there is no means known to science [or magic] whereby life can be imparted to the non-living. Professor Beale, of King's College, London, who, with Lord Kelvin, ranks at the head of British scientists, says: "The idea of any relation having been established between the non-living and the living, by a gradual advance from lifeless matter to the lowest forms of life, and so onward to the higher and more complex, has not the slightest evidence from the facts of any section of living nature, of which anything is known." Thus, even in that early age, the magicians are unmasked as frauds, not however by argument but by demonstration.

The Holy Ghost gives us the names of the leaders in this magical pretension, *Jannes* and *Jambres* (2 Tim. 3: 1-9), because He knew that those opponents of the work of God would be reproduced in Christendom by those who, "having a form of godliness," *deny the power thereof*. But we also learn from the story that, in the face of some impostures, God's way for His people lies in perseverance in what is good, leaving it to impostors to expose themselves by their inability to continue. We know that Christendom is confronted today by teachers "having a name to live" who are enemies of the cross and know not Him who died thereon. But let those who

know Christ as "our life" persist in the demonstration of that life, and the interests of Christ will be safeguarded to the confusion of deceivers.

The Fourth Plague. Seeing that Pharaoh remains unyielding, Moses is told to accost him early in the morning as he comes to the river, and say unto him: "Thus saith the Lord, Let My people go, that they may serve Me;" warning him of the nature of the penalty that will come upon him if he persists in disobedience. He refuses to heed the admonition: "And there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies." But this time, and henceforth, a "division" is erected between Goshen, where Israel resides, and Egypt. An invisible barrier prevents the pests that fill Egypt from menacing Goshen. Some believe that a kind of beetle appeared in this swarm, while the margin of our Authorized Version says, "a mixture" of noisome beasts. Moreover, Ps. 78: 85 says: God sent "*divers* sorts of flies"—probably "the gad-fly, the dog-fly, the cockroach and the Egyptian beetle." Dense clouds of these assailants take possession of the palace, and penerate the dwellings of the people. They are overhead, under foot, in fact everywhere. There is no momentary relief from them. Unable to survive their tormenting, their sickening and corrupting presence, Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron, and says: "Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land." But when Moses says, "We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God, as He shall command us," the king replies, "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away." To this he adds, as if repentant, "Intreat for me!" With a warning against further deceit, Moses agrees to intreat

for him and does so. But no sooner is relief granted, than Pharaoh refuses to let the people go.

The god Baal-Zebul, venerated in Egypt as Protector from seasonal invasions from such pests, is thus demonstrated to be powerless before the God of Israel, who is now supplicated to remove them.

The Fifth Plague. "Then the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain. And the Lord shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt, and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel" (Exod. 9: 1-4). All this takes place without effect upon the king other than increased hardness of heart.

Professor Ingraham says: "This miracle is aimed at Apis, and Mnevis, and Amun, the ram-headed god of Thebes, and at the entire system of their worship of animals."

The Sixth Plague. Moses is commanded to sprinkle ashes of the furnace toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh, and it becomes dust which produces "a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt," afflicting the magicians so severely that they cannot stand "before Moses" in their efforts to frustrate the lessons conveyed by the judgments upon the gods of Egypt. Pharaoh, however, again refuses to submit to the pressure brought upon him.

Respecting the significance of this plague, an authority states that in the temple of Typhon, a Nubian slave

would be burned alive at a certain season of the year, the officiating priests gathering the ashes and casting them high into the air, calling on their god, and praying him that, wheresoever an atom of the ashes is borne on the wind, evil may not visit the place. But in this plague, God mocks their ritual by the character of the disease—*boils*. He shows that theirs is an *inward corruption* and cannot be prevented by precautions that treat it as a peril from without. To this we may add that the “furnace” from which Moses is to take ashes is in the Hebrew rendered “Brick-kiln.” Thus that which signifies the means of enslaving Israel, becomes the means of retribution upon the Egyptians. They may “read their sin in their punishment.”

The Seventh Plague. Early in the morning Moses warns Pharaoh of the punishment about to come unless he submits to the commands of God. He refuses to do so. Consequently a hurricane of hail and fire with mighty thunderings devastates the land. Yet a gracious opportunity of escape from this affliction is extended to all Egyptians who may be disposed to treat these warnings with respect. Thus all who gather their livestock into a place of shelter save them, whereas those who disbelieve the word of God and ignore His counsel, leaving them exposed, lose them. It is a fearful storm. “There was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation” (Exod. 9: 24). The exception to this destruction is the land of Goshen. Let us note however that although “the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled;” it is added: “But the wheat and the rye were not smitten: for they were not grown up.” Nevertheless, though Pharaoh acknowledges that he has “sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my

servants are wicked" (Exod. 9: 24), this attitude disappears with relief from the plague. Again Pharaoh "sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants."

It is believed that in this plague we may see how Isis, the god of the seasons and weather, is invoked in vain, the prayers to him being unheeded, while the God of Israel pours His terrible tempest upon the votaries of that helpless deity.

The Eighth Plague. The stubborn king is now warned that in the event of disobedience, a plague of locusts will be sent upon the land. As the significance of this warning dawns upon the servants of Pharaoh, they are emboldened to protest to their master, saying: "How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" Whereupon he proposes: "Go, serve the Lord your God; but who are they that shall go?" And on being told that, "With our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord," he replies, "Not so: go ye that are men, and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire." And with this preposterous offer the ambassadors of God are hounded from the royal presence in the manner in which an oriental monarch, annoyed at an obnoxious suppliant, signals attendants to eject him. Whereupon Moses stretches out his rod over Egypt, and the vast host of locusts coming with the east wind, light upon and cover the land. "They covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field." Again the king seems to yield. For

"Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you (the latter expression a reference to the violent ejection). Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the Lord your God, that He might take away from me this death only" (Exod. 10: 16, 17). Mere words. For no sooner are the destructive bands turned by a strong western wind and cast into the Red Sea, than the self-willed monarch determines to retain his slaves.

The adoration and rites of Serapis, who is adored as Egypt's protector against locust invasion and devastation, proves him unable to respond to the intreaties of his worshippers, because the one true God is judging the gods of Egypt.

The Ninth Plague. Commanded by God, Moses stretches forth his hand toward heaven, "and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days; they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." We are told this was "darkness which may be felt." "All the activities of the land were paralyzed. The stoutest hearts were dismayed. It seemed as if their greatest deity had suddenly deserted them, abandoning their case. Perhaps the light would never visit them again. In that land of radiant sunlight it was an awful experience. The very temples were so draped in gloom that the priests could not see the sacred beasts, nor were they able to perform their usual rites. For the first time in perhaps centuries great Memnon's statue failed to greet the beams of the morning with music" (*Meyer*). But in Goshen there is light in every dwelling, giving their residents every opportunity to make ready for their coming exodus, while concealing their movements from their enemies. These "saw not

one another, neither rose from his place for three days."

Again Pharaoh is, although slowly, aroused to the peril of his attitude, and getting a message to Moses, who probably places himself where he may be reached, says: "Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you." But Moses replies: "Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come hither." But this so infuriates the proud monarch that he suddenly breaks off further negotiations, saying: "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die." This is final. And Moses, recognizing this, says: "Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face no more." But before leaving the unhappy man, he prophesies his doom to him (Exod. 11: 4-10); after which "he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger."

We may add that, "If *Menephtah* was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, as some hold, this plague has a special significance. A sculptural image of this Pharaoh is preserved. His hand is outstretched in worship, and underneath the stand in hieroglyphics are these words: 'He adores the Sun; he worships Hor of the solar horizon.' Suddenly darkness, which could be felt, came upon Egypt. Pharaoh and all Egypt learned now that their idols were helpless" (*Gaebelein*). Thus is Jehovah judging the gods of Egypt.

One Plague More

We are now to see "one plague more" (Exod. 11: 1; 12: 13), the tenth and last. In this connection we shall consider "the passover."

In Hebrews 11, where certain acts of Moses are ap-

proved, the keeping of the passover is put to his credit. Speaking of Israel, it says: "*They* passed through the Red Sea;" but *Moses* "*kept the passover*" (ver. 28). Thus God calls attention to his *faith* as, perceiving the possibility of the people's destruction, he instructs the elders to explain to them the way of shelter and to see that every one takes it. "He kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, *lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.*" He has travail of soul for them. Therefore God accredits him with insuring the security of Israel and with nourishing and equipping them for the journey before them.

In the instructions to the people respecting the passover, the month in which it is slain is now called the "beginning of months," for everything for God's people begins with redemption.

On the tenth day of this month a lamb is taken and kept until the evening of the fourteenth day. To whom this lamb points is revealed in the words: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 7: 8).

It is noteworthy that nothing is said of the first ten days. Similarly, with the exception of a reference to his stay in Jerusalem at the age of twelve, nothing is said of the private life of the Lord. Apocryphal writings teem with fanciful episodes of it, but Scripture is silent thereon. The days prior to the tenth of the month refer to the lamb *before public selection* for sacrificial purposes on the tenth day. As "ten" is the number of *responsibility*, it speaks of our Lord come out in public at the age of thirty (which is 10 x 3—the fulness of testimony to His fitness to undertake our responsibility).

However, after the paschal lamb's selection it is sub-

ject to observation, and if any blemish is discovered in it before the fourteenth day, is rejected as unsuitable. This answers to the period of Christ's public ministry during which He invites the most minute inspection, saying: "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" (John 8: 46). And when Caiaphas asks Him "of His doctrine" He replies: "I spake openly to the world: I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing" (John 18: 19, 20). Everything is as transparent as light. Even the prince of this world, so watchful of every move, can find "nothing" in Him whereon he can begin to operate (John 14: 20). Manifestly the Lord is the unblemished Lamb on the way to Calvary. Forever adored be His name!

On the fourteenth day of the month, at evening, the lamb is slain. Its blood is sprinkled on "the lintel and the two side-posts" of the doors of Israel, revealing the obedience of faith in God's declaration as to the way of shelter. Whereupon the household is to retire within the shelter of the blood-sprinkled house: "None of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning."

The blood meets the requirements of God's throne respecting sin, God saying: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Israel's shelter does not depend upon *their* valuation of the blood; they are inside the house where they cannot see it. The blood is outside, under the eye of Him who can estimate its efficacy, whose claims are met and whose character is vindicated thereby.

Now Israel eats of the lamb "roast with fire," and are thus nourished for the journey before them; they appropriate as food the lamb that suffered for them, the lamb that had been exposed to the flame without protection, searched in every part by direct contact with the fire. In this way it teaches how Christians are nourished by

communing with Christ concerning His sufferings for them.

Regarding "unleavened bread," let us quote from the "Numerical Bible."

"For "leaven" itself there are two words, the one meaning properly "a leaving," or remainder, because it was, in fact, a lump of dough left from a former time; while the other means simply "leaven" or "ferment." The "old leaven" of which the apostle speaks to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5) is connected with the first thought. The introduction of the old into that which is new is what the enemy would ever use to transform and corrupt this. It may be the spirit of Judaism, the old covenant introduced into the new; it may be, what is of the flesh into the new life which is of God. It may come in as superstition and formalism (the leaven of the Pharisees), or as more open Sadducean rationalism and unbelief, or as simply pandering to the world—"the leaven of Herod" (see Matt. 16). In any case it is corruption-leaven, . . . departure from God. . . . And this is a thing not merely negative and passive: it is by the law of its nature what all evil is—a *ferment*, a revolt, an antagonism to all that is of God.

The unleavened bread the apostle interprets as "sincerity and truth"—of course, Godward. It is the spirit of integrity with Him—whole-hearted surrender to His blessed will. It is the spirit which says, "Search me, O God, and know my thoughts."

The further accompaniment of "bitter herbs" speaks of the repentance or self-judgment wrought in the hearts of those who begin to learn what their sins cost Christ.

Thus sheltered and nourished, Israel is now equipped for the journey before them. They are to put *girdles* upon their loins, so that their loose oriental garments may not impede their progress as they walk; they are to have *shoes* on their feet that they may walk without injury; and take *staff* in hand to lean upon.

Similarly are we told that "the loins of our minds" are to be "girt about with truth;" our feet "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," as we lean for support upon the sure word of God (1 Pet. 1: 13; Eph. 6: 14, 15).

But the hour has arrived when God visits upon the Egyptians "one plague more." We may envision the palace of the Pharaohs guarded by sentries. But what can this avail now? In the palace, in the peasant's hut, in every part of the land, the firstborn is slain; the firstborn of cattle included. A heart-rending cry, the wail of a stricken nation, pierces the night; for no house has been exempted from death. Thus it is that with one voice the nation demands the instant exit of Israel.

Their long enslavement is, however, to some extent, compensated for by the jewelry and clothing asked and received by the Israelites. The term "borrowed" in our Version is a mis-translation. Israel *asks* and receives. Through God's interposition they are "in favor" at the moment, the Egyptians feeling they have wronged them, so that they give them what they ask, knowing they will see them no more.

At last they are on the march: "Six hundred thousand . . . men" besides women and children, accompanied by a "mixed" multitude who follow them. They comprise a body of nearly three million souls. They go up from Egypt "harnessed" (Exod. 13: 18), not armed as warriors but arranged in ranks. Thus they leave the place of thralldom, their faces turned toward the land of promise.

At the Red Sea and Elsewhere

Victor Hugo, in his description of the disaster to French arms at Sedan, says: "This disaster . . . was easy of avoidance by any other man, but impossible of avoidance for

Louis Bonaparte. He avoided it so little that he went to meet it. *Lex fati*. Our army seemed expressly arranged for the catastrophe. . . . No place could have been better calculated to shut in an army. . . Its very numbers were against it. Once in, if the way out were blocked, it could never leave it again." What a catastrophe! Eighty thousand trained men in a position likened to a "basin," compelled to surrender.

It is therefore with amazement that one reads of the marching orders given Moses at this time. They appear to direct the hosts of Israel into a snare. But as it is God who gives these orders, they are implicitly obeyed.

Says Jamieson, Fawcett and Brown:

The Israelites. . . were already on the borders of the desert, and a short march would have placed them beyond the reach of pursuit, as the chariots of Egypt could have made little progress over dry and yielding sand. But at Etham, instead of pursuing their journey eastward with the sea on their right, they were suddenly commanded to diverge to the south, keeping the gulf on their left; a route which not only detained them lingering on the confines of Egypt, but, in adopting it, they actually turned their backs on the land of which they had set out to obtain the possession. A movement so unexpected, and of which the ultimate design was carefully concealed, could not but excite the astonishment of all, even of Moses himself, although, from his implicit faith in the wisdom and power of his heavenly Guide, he obeyed. The object was to entice Pharaoh to pursue, in order that the moral effect, which the judgments on Egypt had produced in releasing God's people from bondage, might be still further extended over the nations by the awful events transacted at the Red Sea. . . . Pharaoh naturally thought from the error into which they appeared to have fallen by entering that defile, he could intercept them. He believed them now en-

tirely in his power, the mountain chain being on one side, the sea on the other, so that, if he pursued them in the rear, escape seemed impossible.

But that is not all. "The Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn [to the left] and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-Zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea" (Exod. 14: 12). Thus encamped they appear as if bewildered and stopped—faced by the sea; while the armies of Egypt are in motion to overtake them. For Pharaoh and his servants, having recovered from fright, are saying: "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" And the king takes "six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them," and pursues after Israel. Egyptian exultation now reaches its height as the pursued are located. "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in," say the pursuers. And breaking loudly into a cry, they say: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw the sword, my hand shall destroy them."

Meanwhile Israel is shut in before "Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-Zephon." Terrifying names these! For Pi-hahiroth means "Mount of the caverns," as if threatening to swallow Israel in darkness. Migdol is a "tower" at a strategic place, where men are stationed to impose the might of Egypt upon fugitives. And Baal-Zephon means "Lord of the north," a reminder of the dread authority that sat so heavily upon them in Egypt. At this very place Israel is commanded to turn leftward facing the sea, and cease marching, while Pharaoh hastens to overtake them. In terror they cry to the Lord.

Unlike the French at Sedan, they are not an army of eighty thousand men, but a host of nearly three million, of whom the greater part are women and children. Nevertheless, Moses says to them: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you today: for the Egyptians which ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exod. 14: 13, 14).

In the meantime the "pillar of cloud," the Shekinah, the sign of the presence of God, goes *behind* the camp of Israel, lodging between it and the Egyptians. During the night it is a wall of darkness to the pursuers and thus delays their movements; while it sends forward beams of light to the pursued, thereby enabling them to make whatever movements may be enjoined upon them.

At last the moment arrives when they are commanded to *go forward*, a pathway being opened up in the following manner. "And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land...and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left" (Exod. 14: 21, 22). In due course the hosts of Pharaoh, considerably delayed by the darkness, arrive at the shore of the Red Sea in time to witness the last remnants of Israel making their way to the opposite shore. Urged by the lust of conquest, "all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen" follow, and thus fall into a snare such as no human military genius could have prepared for them. Yes, they follow! But the vigilant Guardian of Israel troubles the host of the Egyptians, and wheel after wheel coming off or turning aside in the bed of the sea, so that they drive their chariots heavily, it dawns upon them that

they are fighting against God—too late. For by this time all Israel are safely arrived on the opposite shore, and Moses, at the command of God, stretches his rod over the sea, and it rolls back upon the impious pursuers of Israel, so that there remains “not so much as one of them.” It is an unprecedented victory over the enemy. In celebrating it, Israel can say to Jehovah: “Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.” They sing: “The Lord is a man of war!” Was ever tactician like He? Was ever victory so complete? Never did an Alexander or Caesar achieve a victory of such skill and magnitude. It is well that Sir Edward Creasy leaves it out of his “Fifteen decisive battles of the world,” for there is *no battle* here; there can be none under such circumstances. It is a military movement of a nature that lies entirely outside the range of human warfare, ancient or modern. In Creasy’s descriptions there is nothing comparable with this. Up to date, it is the most decisive martial victory that has ever been celebrated on this globe. “Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.” And Miriam the prophetess, taking a timbrel, is followed by the women “with timbrels and dances” in celebration of this victory. “And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.”

Thus in the month Abib, “the beginning of months,” Israel redeemed and delivered out of the hands of their enemies, are committed to a path of obedience to their Redeemer. Let us follow their movements.

Proceeding southward in a course parallel with the shore of the Red Sea (now on their right), they arrive

at *Marah*, so called because its waters are found to be bitter. At this discovery the host breaks out in murmuring complaint against Moses. But God directs him to cast a tree into the waters and they are made sweet. The Christian poet interprets this fittingly, saying:

“Death’s bitter waters met our thirst,
Thy cross has made them sweet:
Then on our gladdened vision burst
God’s shady cool retreat.”

Yes, they are conducted to such a retreat, for they arrive at *Elim*, where they rest beneath the shade of seventy palm-trees and drink the waters of twelve wells. But upon resuming their journey they again exhibit petulance and insubordination. Forgetful of past mercies, they declare themselves better off beside the “fleshpots” of Egypt, those fleshpots that furnished Pharaoh’s slaves with strength to perform their terrible schedule of work. How soon have they forgotten their toil in the erection of those depots of munitions to ensure their perpetual slavery; and how forgetful are they of the taskmaster’s lash which wrung wails of anguish from them.

Nothing can be more unreasonable than the murmuring of Israel. It is not that they are in actual need; but because provisions *seem* low to mortal vision, they conclude they *are* low, the blindness of unbelief shutting out from view the great Provider who is among them, and reviving illusions of the system they have so recently been emancipated from.

And are their ways so very unlike our own? Having been delivered from the authority of darkness, do we not sometimes have recourse to the former things which ministered to our lust? For what is the “world” but a system of lust furnished by its god in order to impart a feverish energy to those who will serve him? (1 John 2: 15-17).

Let us observe then that the murmuring of the people is against God. In a touching way Moses says: "The Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against Him: and what are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord" (Exod. 16: 8).

However, "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God" (Exod. 16: 12). All this is carried out as promised. Quails are furnished in the evening; brought within striking distance by a wind—birds not larger than doves. And manna lies in the morning dew, which, when baked, tastes "like wafers of honey." It comes as regularly as the earth turns on its axis. Moreover the clothing of that host wears not out, and their shoes withstand the wear of that terrible wilderness. And eventually the rising generation enters Canaan, the healthiest, most fully provisioned, and best disciplined host that ever seized an inheritance.

The Smitten Rock

A time of severe trial for Moses arrives again; he is being blamed for lack of water. Since their emancipation he has endured their reproaches while serving them. Now they accuse him of holding out false promises to them, and say: "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" And so menacing are they that he tells God: "They be almost ready to stone me."

Under such circumstances how helpless would have been the polished graduate from Egypt, and how necessary had been the day-in-and-day-out training in the desert. What would Moses have done had he not learned to know God intimately and to wait upon Him con-

tinually? To whom could he have turned? Well for him and for Israel that he relies only upon God, for only He can tell him what to do.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take it in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; *and thou shalt smite the rock*, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

In 1 Corinthians 10: 4 we are taught that the smitten rock signifies Christ—“that rock was Christ”—that “spiritual rock” that “followed them.” For in their travels, as appointed of God, they find it at their side. Thus are we reminded how Christ’s compassion for His people makes Him constantly available to them. But He had to be *smitten* that this might be so.

To the woman of Samaria He says: “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water” (John 4: 10). If she will take the place of a needy suppliant, He will, because of redemption, give her the Spirit, who will be in her a refreshing energy or fountain “springing up to eternal life,” rising to its source. He will conduct her affections and mind to God and to Christ. And out of the inward parts of all those thus refreshed by communion with Divine Persons, will flow “rivers of living water” for needy mankind.

The Battle of Rephidim

It begins with a sudden and pitiless descent upon a number of helpless folk, unable to keep pace with the main body of the long line of emigrants slowly taking

their way toward Canaan. And the attackers are descendants of Esau, brother of their father Jacob; they are cousins.

It might be argued: They cannot permit such a host in close proximity without imperilling themselves. Might not the strangers seize their strongholds and devour their pasture? But this is not the manner of that people. On the contrary, we learn that as they begin to arrive near the borders of the promised land, they send an embassy to Sihon, king of the Amorites, saying: "Let us pass through the land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well; but we will go along by the king's highway, until we be past thy borders" (Num. 21: 21-31); and it is the refusal of this amicable proposal, and the unprovoked attack upon these travelers that leads to the destruction of Sihon's army and the loss of his country.

We may, therefore, see that the assault of *Amalek* is peculiarly offensive to God. His feelings about it are expressed as follows: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee...and *he feared not God*" (Deut. 25: 17, 18). The latter expression implies that the attacked are under divine protection, and Amalek has the evidence of this in the reports from Egypt and the Red Sea. The attack is therefore not merely unnatural but impious. Hence God says to Israel: "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven, thou shalt not forget it."

And centuries afterward, King Saul, failing to carry out this command when told to do so, forfeits his kingdom and perishes on Mount Gilboa. And many years later, when Haman the Agagite, of the race of Amalek, attempts to lay his finger upon the people whom his

forefathers attacked in the wilderness, God sees to it that he is hanged for making the attempt.

But let us witness the fierce onset of Amalek upon the momentarily unprotected stragglers attached to the huge host wending its way to the land promised to their father Abraham.

The din of war, the shouts of the fierce warriors of the desert, mingled with the screams of women and children, and the groans of the wounded and dying, bring to their assistance the more active and warlike men of Israel; and it would appear as if the assailants draw off to put themselves in battle array for the contest that is about to take place. Things are now being done on a large scale and in orderly fashion. Moses, a man of understanding, gives orders: "And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose out men, and go out, fight against Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand."

On the morrow, Joshua having arranged the available fighting men in the way that his instinct suggests (and a greater soldier never lived), engages in battle. It is a fearful fight. Sometimes it sways to the advantage of the enemy, and sometimes victory leans toward Israel; but it is obstinately fought and continues the entire day. In the meantime Moses on the top of the hill holds up the rod, and as he does so, Israel sweeps the enemy before them with invincible power; but when through sheer weariness he is compelled to lower his hands, Israel becomes enfeebled, and the Amalekites rally with renewed strength. Seeing this, Aaron and Hur, who are with him, put a stone under him, whereon he sits, and going to each side of him, support his uplifted hands until darkness ends the struggle, wherein Amalek goes down to defeat, Joshua routing his forces with fearful slaughter.

Nevertheless, it is God who wins this battle, working through the faith of His servant Moses. And this the latter acknowledges and, building an altar, names it "Jehovah Nissi," which means, "The Lord my banner."

We may remark that as *the manna* speaks of Christ in humiliation, *the water* of the refreshment of the Spirit, so *Amalek's attack* portrays the warfare waged by the "flesh." And we may note that at the moment of attack Israel had been asking, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" showing that when the guiding presence of God is questioned, we are the prey of the enemy. We are therefore warned against his tactics in these words: "Abstain from fleshly lusts, *which war against the soul*" (1 Pet. 2: 11).

The Ethiopian Woman and Miriam

Hobab, a son of Raguel (called Reuel and Jethro in Exod. 2: 18; 3: 1), is in the camp at this time, and being a keen-eyed wilderness man, is asked by Moses to become a guide—"instead of eyes"—to the hosts of the Lord. We are, however, not told that he accepts the position. But God seems to resent this as an interference with His ways, for we learn immediately of a new departure on His part: He sends out the "ark of the covenant" ahead of Israel "to search out a resting-place" for them; He is and will continue to be "*eyes*" unto them (Num. 10: 29-36). Hobab probably arrived with his father Jethro, who brought Zipporah, the wife of Moses, and her two sons to the camp, where they were warmly received and entertained in the tent of Moses (Exod. 18).

Jethro, who appears to be a man of considerable "common sense," observing his son-in-law engaged in the numerous responsibilities of his position, judging the people and applying the law to the various questions brought before him, and doing this daily "from the

morning unto the evening," supposing he is over-taxed and will wear out before his time, suggests that he select "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness," to judge these questions, reserving only "every great matter" for himself. This plan is adopted. We are not told, however, what pressure may have been brought to bear upon Moses at this time, if any; nor what exercises of mind he may have undergone before making the change. But we shall learn later that the uncomplaining spirit in which Jethro finds him has given place to one of dissatisfaction, and that it is only after expressing it in unmistakable terms that the change is adopted.

In the meantime Moses gets into trouble because of his marriage with an "Ethiopian woman" who is not popular with Miriam his sister (Num. 12: 1). As we hear of Zipporah only once (Exod. 18: 1-4) since her protest against what she knows to be God's ordinance of circumcision, it is assumed by some that she may have died before the episode we are about to consider, and that it is another woman whose presence provokes the quarrel. This had been the writer's opinion, but some remarks in "*Scripture Truth*" appear to be correct.

It seems to us that Zipporah was the Ethiopian or Cushite woman who aroused the jealousy of Miriam. The only difficulty in this conclusion is that she was the daughter of a Midianite priest, while the woman of Numbers 12 is called an Ethiopian. But Habakkuk connects the two, "I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble" (ch. 3: 7). It is probable that the Ethiopians had overflowed to the Midianite side of the Red Sea.

Miriam and Aaron must have seen Zipporah for the first time when Jethro, her father, brought her and her sons to Moses in the wilderness (Exod. 18),

for it is probable that after the scene in Exod. 4: 24, 25, she returned to her father's house. Jealousy flamed up at once in the heart of Miriam, and the fact that Moses invited Hobab her brother to be a leader for the nation (Num. 10) made it easy for Aaron to join with Miriam.

In this bitter resentment of the presence of the Gentile woman in the camp, Miriam was typical of Israel and the determined opposition of that nation against any favor being shown to the Gentiles. We see how this hatred showed itself at Nazareth when the Lord Jesus spoke of blessing reaching out to the Gentiles (Luke 4: 28), and again in Acts 22: 21-23, when Paul spoke of his being sent to the Gentiles. The high place of favor that Miriam had hitherto filled would pass to Zipporah, and it thoroughly tested her and brought out the evil that was in her heart, and brought down God's wrath upon her, and we see what answers to this in the case of Israel. "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2: 16).

According to Romans 11 the Gentiles now have the place of favor that was once Israel's, and out from among them God is taking a people for His name, who shall share the glory of the Lord when He shall rule over Israel. Moses was a figure of the Lord in this respect.

Miriam was shut out from the camp for seven days, a leper and an outcast, and the camp made no movement during that period, so the people of Israel cannot move on in the ways of God until healed and cleansed from their sin and their opposition to God's ways with the Gentiles, and a new heart is given them as a result of the intervention and intercession of the Lord on their behalf.

Aaron, who is "not a trouble-maker" but apt to follow stronger wills than his own, joins his sister in this hostile attitude toward Moses, whom they accuse of occupying

a position not conferred upon him by God, saying: "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us? *And the Lord heard them*" (Num. 12: 2).

It is believed that in this Moses is reaping the fruit of his complaint at the burden laid upon him, saying: "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me" (Num. 11: 14). Greatly pressed by their perversity and petulance, he says: "Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me," and seeks to share it with others. No doubt the use of helpful assistance is a wise measure in some circumstances. We may see an example of this in the narrative of D. L. Moody, as we observe how that extraordinary workman with rare skill selects local helpers, to "deal with souls" and attend to necessary details in his vast activities. In this we see a healthy accession of strength through the enlistment of workers adapted to promote the interests of Christ. It is a perfectly natural arrangement, greatly desired and guided by a discerning man of God. But the new arrangement of Moses, at the suggestion of Jethro, seems to differ from this. When approached by his father-in-law, he seems to have been a hard worker who, *without complaint*, explains his duties to his questioner. Hitherto he had been divinely sustained. But the further explanations suggested by Numbers 11, seem to exhibit him as a complainant against the methods of God, as he says: "*Thou layest*" the burden of all this people upon me, and protests at the divine appointment. May we not justly enquire: Is it not possible that this sidelight on proceedings results from the well-meant interference of a kindly man? But who knows better than God what a servant can bear? In his "*Thousand Tales Worth Telling*," Henry Pickering relates that Henry Moorehouse had a lame daughter who had the joy of carrying

a present upstairs to her sick mother *because her father carried her, present and all*. Thus we may ask: What difference will the burdens of Moses make if God is carrying him, burdens and all? But this faithful servant of God gets tired when he looks within and measures himself against the difficulties. And on this occasion God hearkens to his complaint and distributes his burdens upon the shoulders of seventy of the elders of Israel, but takes "of the spirit, which is upon" Moses and puts it upon the seventy. Thus a privilege is conferred upon the elders, but it lessens the privilege of Moses. Moreover, it appears that the new arrangement is no improvement upon the old one. However, it serves to reveal the unjealous character of Moses, for when the spirit of prophecy manifests itself in the newly appointed seventy, and particularly when Eldad and Medad (who went not out to the tabernacle) prophesy in the camp, he exhibits the spirit of a workman who wants the work done by any who can do it, saying to Joshua, who suggests, "My lord Moses, forbid them," "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them." Whereupon he, with the elders of Israel, return to the camp, possibly to give a hearing to the two prophets.

It may be true, however, that the new arrangement supplies Miriam and Aaron with a pretext for a *further re-arrangement* of matters. If so, does it not show how well it is to wait upon the Lord about burdens that seem excessive? For we may be assured that God takes no pleasure in putting pressure upon us for its own sake. In the circumstances we are considering it seems as if Moses has only increased his difficulties.

What he has to say, if anything, in this situation, we are not told. All that we learn is that "the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the

face of the earth;" hence he leaves his troubles with God. And the Lord hears the slander of His servant, and speaks "suddenly" to the parties involved, saying: "Come out, ye three, unto the tabernacle of the congregation." Summoning Aaron and Moses to stand forth, He informs them that although He honors prophets by appearing to them in visions and dreams, He takes such pleasure in Moses that He speaks to him "mouth to mouth." And He asks: "Were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" Whereupon He exhibits Miriam "leprous and white as snow," thus branding the interference with His servant as loathsome sin.

But Aaron is repentant and pleads with Moses for his stricken sister. Moses cries unto the Lord for her, saying: "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." His request is granted, but under conditions that impress upon all Israel the divine censure, for Miriam is shut out from the camp for seven days. Meanwhile every forward movement is delayed while the people learn that God will not tolerate interference with His arrangements. After this solemn pause the cleansed leper resumes her place, and Israel moves forward.

Mount Sinai and Some of Its Lessons

Three months after the exodus from Egypt, the children of Israel encamp before Mount Sinai where, after recounting His ways with them. God proposes that if they will obey His voice and keep His covenant, they shall be a kingdom of priests and an holy nation. They do not hesitate to accept this *conditional* relationship, and answer: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exod. 19: 8). "The people, instead of knowing themselves, and saying, 'We dare not (though bound to obey) place ourselves under such a condition, and risk our blessing, yea, make sure of losing it,' undertake to do

all that the Lord hath spoken." . . . "If we kept the law in everything, God would not have to reproach us; we should not be sinners. It is a complete delusion to take up the law as the rule of what *I ought* to be, *if I neglect* to enquire what *I am*. It is like a child about to be whipped, ready enough to say he *will* be good, while in reality his promises only show he has no proper sense of the evil he has committed" (*Darby*). Therefore Israel's promise to keep the law is but the rash and superficial utterance of a people ignorant of their condition as sinners. Administered as it was by divine wisdom, however, it taught its lesson, namely, that although Israel assumes they can present "their own righteousness" to God, *they have none*, and are persistent transgressors of His holy law. Thus it serves its purpose as a "schoolmaster" unto Christ (Gal. 3: 24).

It is noteworthy, however, that the "unmixed" law never came among Israel, Moses breaking the stones containing it when the corrupt state of the nation stared him in the face. When the ten commandments did come, they were accompanied by *a system of sacrifices* that assumed man's sinnership and disclosed the way of blessing. The former we term the "moral law," the latter the "ceremonial law;" the term "law" appertaining to the latter because in the form of a ritual "guarded by explicit instructions."

But the apostle declares that the commandment, "which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death" (Rom. 7: 10), even although in itself holy and just and good. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3: 20). Men assume that it is the way of overcoming sin. But Scripture says that sin "taking occasion by the commandment" produces in sinners "all manner of concupiscence;" that "without the law sin

was dead; for I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom. 7: 6-10). The law acts not merely as a mirror, showing those who look therein their uncleanness (without furnishing cleansing material), but by its demands exposes the human urge to transgression. Hence as *the Gentile* is demonstrated a sinner without the law (Rom. 1, 2), and *the Jew* a transgressor under the law (Rom. 2: 17-29), "every mouth" (Gentile and Jew) is stopped, and the whole world adjudged guilty before God (Rom. 3: 19).

But to return. On the third day the new principle of dealing is inaugurated in suitable fashion, for God comes down upon the mount in a thick cloud amid thunders and lightnings and the sound of a trumpet. "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly" (Exod. 19: 18). And so terrified are the people that they say unto Moses: "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (ver. 19). Nevertheless, when Moses reminds the people of their responsibility to keep "the words of the Lord," he is answered as before: "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do" (Exod. 24: 3). Whereupon burnt offerings and peace offerings are sacrificed. "And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar." Again he reads to them from the book of the covenant, and again the people say: "All that the Lord hath said will we do, *and be obedient.*" Thus the covenant, with a curse for non-continuance in every part of its demands, is confirmed by blood.

"Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel" to an appointed

place where they have a vision of God (Exod. 24: 9-11). But He says unto Moses: "Come up to Me unto the mount, and be there; and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them" (Exod. 24: 12). Thus will the people have a record of those words already spoken in their hearing, from which they can be reminded of the agreement into which they have entered.

What an impressive sight it is for the onlookers who stand "afar off" to witness the ascent of Moses accompanied by his servant Joshua as they climb the cloud-covered mount. For "the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went in into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights" (Exod. 24: 15-18).

Forty days is quite a period of testing to a people who are not walking by faith, hence we discover that they become restive. Not having appreciated God's presence among them, they now virtually say: Without Moses we are without God. "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him."

With their idolatrous proposition the people approach Aaron. This serves to bring out his character; for he is not a man to stand in the breach; he cannot say No! Indeed, the fact that the people make advances to him with their plan, shows that they estimate him shrewdly. At any rate, he suggests an offering of gold; and upon receiving their earrings, melts and moulds them into a calf which he fashions with a graving tool; whereupon they declare, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." But Aaron, in an

effort to limit the extent of the movement to have a *visible* representation of God—a transgression of the second commandment—really endorses it by building an altar before the image and making a proclamation: “Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.” He uses the name of Jehovah to gloss over their sin.

At this point we anticipate Moses’ question to Aaron: “What did this people do to thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?” To which he replies: “Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf” (Exod. 32: 24).

By this bland explanation of the calf’s emergence from the flame (for we doubt not that the people “are set on mischief”) Aaron would hide his failure to resist the popular apostasy; but he cannot thus explain away his unreliability in an emergency.

Returning, however, to Moses, let us observe that before his arrival where he sees the calf and witnesses the dancing around it, he is being prepared for the worst, being put through exercises of heart that temper his actions when the apostasy bursts upon his vision. For instance, while in the mount, and apprised of the doings at its base, God says to him: Israel is “thy people,” a “stiff-necked” people, which I will displace by a nation from thyselves. But Moses answers: They are “*Thy* people,” the subjects of Thy care. Whereupon he pictures the exodus from Egypt and prophesies the effect of any report that the movement has collapsed. Will not the Egyptians say: He did worse to them than He did to us?

He plagued us fearfully, slew our firstborn, and drowned our army in the Red Sea; *but He has overwhelmed Israel*. "For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth" (Exod. 32: 18). Thus would Jehovah be advertised as a malignant deity of limited powers, and a deceiver of those whose cause He appears to espouse. Thus does Moses argue the case with God; concluding with an appeal to His oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel: "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever" (Exod. 32: 13). This argument gives great pleasure to God. It shows how firmly implanted in His servant's heart is the persuasion that he is engaged in no mere human adventure, but in a divine movement.

When therefore we read, "The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people," we gather from the very expression that He had never given them up, and had been but testing the steadfastness of His servant.

However, Moses now begins to descend the mountain. On the way down, accompanied by Joshua, he hears an unusual noise in the camp they are approaching. It is a din such as usually accompanies heathen orgies. It is a riot of licentiousness remindful of Egypt. It is religious pandemonium. Such is the meaning of the expression: "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play" (Exod. 32: 6).

Hearing this noise, Joshua, "a young man" and a *soldier*, says: "There is a noise of war in the camp." But Moses replies: "It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome, but the noise of them that sing do I hear." He can discern the accents of apostasy.

But at this moment, the actual sight of doings in the camp bursts upon his view. "And it came to pass, as soon as he was come nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing; and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount." We are not to suppose this is an outburst of fleshly rage, but indignation in sympathy with God. And the breaking of the tables but reveals the understanding of one who knows what to do. For had the law entered the camp at this moment, it must have cut off the idolators to a man.

It ought to be observed, however, that when God replaces the broken tables, saying to Moses, "Hew thee two tables of stone like the former ones," He employs Moses to do the writing. Of course, He says: "I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest" (Deut. 10: 2), but He does so instrumentally by employing Moses. For He says to him: "Write *thou* these words." And again: "And he (Moses) was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (Exod. 34: 27, 28). Thus may we discern God's purpose to act through a mediator, glimpsing the work of that Mediator between God and men, "the Man Christ Jesus."

We may now consider the intercession of Moses on this occasion, saying: "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Exod. 32: 31, 32). Of course God does no such thing, but says: "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book." However, we also learn that, on the ground of sovereign mercy administered through

the mediator, God reveals how He can justly permit Israel to resume their journey toward the promised land.

A new discussion comes up now. Jehovah guarantees an angelic vanguard to His people, but says: "I will not go up in the midst of thee." But when the people are stripped of their "ornaments," a tent is pitched without the camp. "And it came to pass that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp." Into this tent Moses now enters. The cloudy pillar descends and stands at the door, "and the Lord talked with Moses." The people, properly impressed, rise up and worship, "every man in his tent door."

But Moses is now pleading: "If Thy presence go not . . . carry us not up hence." He had already said: "If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray Thee, go among us; *for it is a stiffnecked people;*" their very stiffneckedness requiring the guidance of God. Further, he adds: How can it be known we have found grace in Thy sight unless it be by Thy going with us, for what can make us different from the nations but Thy presence among us?

Do many of the people of God in this day see things as clearly as did Moses? Can ecclesiastical claims, can the heritage from past generations distinguish Christians from the world? By no means. For, while appreciating the Christian heritage, nothing will avail but *the presence of the Lord* among them, manifesting His mind and exhibiting His activities.

We may now see that when God responds to His servant, saying: "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name" (Exod. 33: 17), the latter is so affected that he says: "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." It is as if, discovering his exercise of soul to be

but the reflection of God's mind, he says: I desire to know Thee better; permit me to know Thee in the out-shining of Thy nature. But this cannot be—yet. Hence Jehovah, although proclaiming His own name, and grace and glory, says: "Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by: and I will take away Mine hand, and thou shalt see My back parts: but My face shall not be seen" (Exod. 33: 17-23).

But as Moses beholds God's "back parts" he sees Him moving forward to what He will do in the fulness of time. In that early age the revelation of God in Christ is still future, for the Son in the Father's bosom has not yet come among the sons of men. *But in this age we* (Christians) see the "glory" of God expressed in Christ. "For 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" (2 Cor. 4: 6).

The false conceptions of God that darkened our hearts have been driven out by the light of God. What God is has been revealed to us "in the face of Jesus Christ." As the "face" speaks of expression, we learn that God has been expressed in Christ. But while this testimony has shined into our hearts, it is "to give the light (for the *shining forth* of the light) of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." God enlightens our hearts to shine out of them in testimony.

We are now prepared to consider the law-giver upon his descent with "the two tables of stone like unto the first." Upon his arrival among the people the children

of Israel are afraid to come near him, because "the skin of his face shone." Therefore, while in contact with them, he puts "a vail" upon it; but when he resumes intercourse with Jehovah he takes "the vail off." This is interpreted to mean that the Spirit's present gospel ministry of life and righteousness is such a delightful theme, that its preachers use "great plainness of speech" in announcing it; whereas Moses uses a vail *to dim a glory* that reminds Israel of its legal obligations. Moreover, this is likened to a vail upon Israel's heart while their back is turned upon their Messiah. But as Moses removes the vail from his face when he goes into the presence of the Lord, so "the vail shall be taken away" when Israel turns around and seeks the face of their long repudiated God and Saviour (2 Cor. 3: 7-16).

Building the Tabernacle

During his stay in the mount Moses receives instructions respecting voluntary offerings from the congregation for the tabernacle to be erected in their midst, as it is written: "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Exod. 25: 8, 9).

The tabernacle, God's sanctuary in Israel, imaging the Church as God's habitation by the Spirit, and more widely the Universe, is comprised of materials that set forth *the glories of Christ*; just as in the temple "every whit of it uttereth" His glory (Ps. 29: 9, *margin*).

As imaging the universe, we read, "For every house is builded by some man [as was the tabernacle by Moses]; but he that built all things is God" (Heb. 3: 4)—"*all things*" being, of course, the universe. Thus considered, the court represents the earth; the holy place

the heavenlies; and the holy of holies the presence of God in the "heaven of heavens."

But where we read, "Thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee," we get a prophecy of Him who says: "Thy law have I hid in My heart." But the tables of stone in the heart of the system that symbolizes the universe, reveals that Christ will make the will of God to be the law of that "vast universe of bliss" of which He is the Centre and Sun; all, however, made possible by His obedience to His Father's will in becoming the mercy-seat in order to put everything upon the ground of redemption.

The tabernacle, therefore, is God's expression of delight in His Son fifteen hundred years before His coming into the world. It is a form of language adapted to a people limited in the use of words; it is addressed, as Bunyan would say, to "eye-gate."

This beautiful tent, with its appointments, must have cost no less than a million and a quarter dollars, an astounding sum for that people in that day.

It is enclosed within hangings draped from pillars, forming a court a hundred cubits long and fifty broad. At its east end, in the centre, is the gate of the court, twenty cubits wide. Inside this gate is the altar of burnt-offering, and near to the tabernacle proper is the laver; the tabernacle being divided into two compartments, the holy place and the holy of holies. The holy place is reached first, and measures twenty cubits in length, by ten in breadth and height, its furniture consisting of the golden candlestick, the altar of sweet incense, and the table of showbread. Beyond this, and separated by the "vail" is the holy of holies, ten cubits in length, breadth, and height. *Its* furniture consists of the ark with the mercy-seat upon it. Inside it are the tables of the covenant, Aaron's rod that budded, and the golden

pot of manna. The golden censer is there also (Heb. 9: 3, 4).

A few remarks from the late F. B. Meyer may be appropriate here:

Enter the holy place; your eye is arrested by the heavy but magnificent curtain. . . . Pull that aside, and you pass into a chamber which is a perfect cube, a miniature of the New Jerusalem, whose length, and breadth, and height, are equal. In the Egyptian temple this apartment would contain the crocodile or ibis; but here there was only a box, over which forms of exquisite beauty [the cherubim] bent with outspread wings [as they look upon the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat], and between them a light which was not borrowed from sun nor stars. Could anything more significantly convey the idea that God was a Spirit?

This absence of any visible form in the inner shrine most astonished the rough soldier Pompey, who strode with eager curiosity across the floor, which had never before been pressed by aught but the unsandalled feet of the high priest once a year. He expected to find some visible embodiment of Jehovah, and turned contemptuously away, deriding the empty void. But to Moses it must have been an unparalleled conception, overpowering his thoughts.

The high priest of this system portrays Him who, the offering priest of Calvary, as ascended on high, is the High Priest of our confession. As such He sympathizes with us in our infirmities, in order that we may be lifted above their pressure, and give attention to "our confession." For, prone to be over-burdened by our weaknesses and circumstances, our High Priest makes these things serve God's purpose for our growth in the divine nature.

As it was the sons of Aaron alone, who derived their being from him, who were in the priesthood, so is it

those who have life in Christ who constitute the Christian priesthood. Thus the apostle Peter, writing to the believers in five vast regions, addresses them as an "holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2: 5).

As an example of the significance of the tabernacle imagery, let us consider the "gate of the court." Its coloring at the east end of the court sets forth the *attractiveness* of Him who, when here, said: "I AM THE DOOR." The fine twined linen tells of His spotless purity; the blue, purple, and scarlet, of His heavenly origin, Jewish royalty, and earthly glory secured by His death. The four pillars illustrate the four Gospels holding Him up to view; the silver hooks on fillets, the "ransom" character of His death (Exod. 30: 12-16). Without the latter the draperies will fall to the ground, and there will be *no gate*. Similarly, unless the "ransom" character of Christ's death is proclaimed, there is no announcement of the way to God.

Recently we heard a pulpit orator, over the air, expatiating on the virtues of Jesus, His goodness, discernment, and faithfulness. But there was no *silver* rod, nor were there *silver* hooks in his conception of Calvary; there was no "ransom" in his allusion to it. Not discerning who Jesus really is, not discerning that He, as commanded of the Father, had "authority" to lay down His life and to take it again (John 10: 18), he had no perception of the *vicarious* death of Him who "once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3: 18). The curtains he should have been holding up to view were under foot, because he had no silver hooks attaching them to the silver rods (or fillets); not knowing the way to God, he merely indulged in a petty and variable philosophy emanating from the fleshly mind of man.

It ought to be added that in the "sockets of brass," in which the pillars are imbedded, it is shown that in the *foundations* of the gate the righteousness of God—His consistency with His character—is maintained (Rom. 3: 21). This is further set forth in the brazen altar.

We may thus see that in the "gate of the court" the first thought God impresses upon mankind is the beauty, the attractiveness of His Son—WHO HE IS. It is true that His *work* is also symbolized in the materials of the gate (as we have seen), but the outstanding feature therein is the attractiveness that beckons us to enter. And when one does enter the gate the ground of entrance is fully explained in the brazen altar, and the conscience set at rest. But prior to this, Christ is presented in the grace of His Person. Recently, while looking over some records of medieval days, in "*Three Friends of God*," by Frances Bevan, one could not fail to see in the characters she unveils to view, their adoration of, their delight in Christ—even though some of them were not always clear as to the judicial effectiveness of His work. And while it is cause for thankfulness to God that the latter is now proclaimed with much plainness of speech, it is to be regretted that the former reverence and adoration is in great measure lacking. *Does not the imagery of the way of entrance to God, show that at the outset of the divine dealing with souls, God is calling attention to His glorious Son, personally?* In these days we are hearing prayers for "a revival," prayers which we hope may become persistent. But we know there shall be really a revival if the Son of God becomes more revered and loved and obeyed than He is by those who are His. And the result of such a revival will be that "sinners shall be converted" to God when they behold it.

Finally, the tabernacle was constructed. "It came to pass in the first month, in the second year, on the first

day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up." Moses has seen to everything in most infinitesimal detail. "And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hangings of the gate court. *So Moses finished the work.*" Aaron too, in his holy garments, and his sons in their coats, are anointed for the priestly office, the tabernacle and all therein being similarly anointed.

So when Moses finishes the work "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." We also read that because of the glory cloud "Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." We learn that while the cloud rests upon it, the tabernacle is stationary; but when the cloud ascends, the Levites take the tabernacle to pieces, pack it properly, and follow the cloud to the new resting-place, to set it up there.

The Spies

From the words, "And the Lord spake with Moses, saying: Send thou spies, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel" (Num. 13: 1, 2), one might suppose this plan originates with God. But Moses shows that it comes from the people, for he says: "Ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, *We will send men before us and they shall search out the land.*" Surely an appreciation of God's goodness would have taken His word as guarantee that the inheritance toward which they were traveling was in every respect worthy of their Benefactor. However, Moses complies with their request, and advises as to procedure, no doubt guided of God. But in result the search not only brings to light the people's unbelief, but their contempt for the "earnest of the inheritance"

brought by the spies. For when the latter bring Canaan's figs, pomegranates, and grapes, evidence of the fruitfulness of the promised land, it requires but a few remarks about its fortified cities and warlike inhabitants to set them weeping all night, and arise the next morning in surly discontent with the divine arrangement. So much so that the protests of Caleb and Joshua at their misbehavior merely enrage them to suggest their stoning. They refuse to enter the land. They even go the length of proposing the deposition of Moses as leader, and the election of another to lead them back to Egypt. "In their hearts (they) turned back into Egypt" (Acts 7: 39). However, when God challenges their conduct, saying unto Moses: "How long will this people provoke Me? . . . I will smite them," His servant pleads: "Now if Thou kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which He sware unto them, therefore hath He slain them in the wilderness" (Num. 14: 11-20). Moses is contending for the reputation of God. What a faithful servant he is!

But when the people turn their backs upon the land, we learn that their mood changes, and they propose its invasion. God, however, warns against the fickle proposal. But being obstinate as well as fickle, they make the attempt, only to be repulsed with loss. Thus are they compelled to wander in the wilderness until displaced by a new generation, Caleb and Joshua alone of the original adults entering the land.

In reflecting upon their attempt to remedy their mistakes in their own way, we may see their failure to profit thereby. And may we not thus learn from them? Many years ago we heard of one who, having erred, wrote a brother, assuming he might be able to put things on

their original footing. But the reply was in substance: What the will of the Lord for you *was*, and what it *now is*, may be entirely different. You will have to wait upon Him, and if you are obedient, you may be sure He will do the best that can be done under the circumstances.

Before leaving the account of Israel's refusal to enter the land, let us note they never say: *We are to blame!* Again and again they complain at the hardness of their lot, alleging they have been deceived by false promises of a goodly land, utterly unrepentant of their sin in refusing to enter it. They never blame themselves for the resulting wanderings in the wilderness; they blame God. This tendency to self-exoneration is the bane of the race.

Some years ago, while preaching on the western side of the Canadian Rockies, an example of this came before the writer. Five of us were being driven in a part of the country calling for considerable care on the part of the man at the wheel. Yet for the benefit of "the preacher" on the back seat, he had time to say: "What gets me is how people will talk of a God whom they say is all-powerful and wise, One who foreknows things and is good. If He has these qualities, why does He not use them to prevent evil? I have been reading in the papers that our friends in the States have killed two million baby pigs; have destroyed immense quantities of the earth's products; and have ceased cultivating large sections of the soil—all to manipulate prices. At the same time I read of expensive agencies at work to relieve the poor, many of whom are said to be on the verge of starvation. And behind this confusion there is said to be a good God. If He exists, why doesn't He do something to prevent such confusion?"

In the meantime "the preacher" on the back seat, for

whom all this is intended, asks: "Would you care to hear how a stranger might understand your remarks?" And getting an affirmative answer, replies: "Well, if I had never heard about God, I would gather from your statements that *He is good*. It appears that He is providing abundantly for the need of mankind, giving them real wealth in the form of immense crops, and vast herds and flocks of livestock. All this He presents, saying, 'Here you are; help yourselves!' But from your remarks I gather that man is confused and in uncertain manner looking for a way of getting at this provision. But in his confusion he actually destroys real wealth and limits the production of more, yet supposes that in this way he can better his lot. He is puzzled. *All this you have shown me*. Will he not then cry to God about this? Will he say to Him, 'I am in sore straits?' Will he tell God he has got himself into this predicament? He will not. He will blame God. *Leaving God out of his thoughts and taking his own way, when he gets into trouble for so doing*, he will whine and ask why God fails to prevent evil. It is very certain that the cause of all this trouble is man's broken relations with God because of *sin*."

Yet that Canadian merely re-echoes the sentiments of Adam; his complaint is as old as the human race. In the garden of Eden, when asked by God: How did you get into this trouble? Adam replies: "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3: 12). It is a superficial conception of it that extracts blame for the woman from this statement. Adam is arguing with God, and is placing the blame at His door. He is saying what the twentieth century Canadian said: Seeing You are wise, powerful and good, seeing You foreknow things, why did You give this woman to me? He refuses to acknowledge his

responsibility as God's intelligent creature, his logic betraying him into assuming that he is a mere automaton; *he blames God.*

It is this attitude that reveals the evil bias of sin, that exhibits man as alienated, as lawless. And not until he says, "I have sinned!" is there recovery. *Will you say it, O reader? Will you say it to God—now?* And He will direct you to His glorious Son, and put you under His control. Thus you will cease to be lawless, you will be recovered; you will be in the kingdom of God.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram

Korah, a Levite, and grandson of Kohath, not content with Levitical service, aspires to the priesthood (Num. 16: 8-11), which belongs to Aaron and his sons alone. "Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth," of the tribe of Reuben, men of prestige in Israel, but disaffected as to their status, lend their aid to Korah in a plot to alter the arrangements of God. Hence they approach and enlist the influence of "two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown." Assembled together, they protest to Moses and Aaron, saying: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing that all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?"

This complaint assumes that the government which they oppose has been undertaken by self-appointed leaders. Not the slightest understanding have they of the man who would have ended his days in the backside of the desert did God permit him to do so; the quiet shepherd who was commanded to take off his shoes in the presence of God ere his appointment to the care of Israel. No conception have they of the purpose of God

who, having reasoned with His servant, having expostulated with him, "*thrusts*" him into the work. Little do these proud men know what true service is. They suppose that men press forward of their own wills into a congenial position; they do not know that God exposes to them their utter incompetency in themselves, their absolute dependence upon Himself, while insisting upon implicit obedience; and that thus they are being fashioned into and are kept in serviceable condition. They do not know that (as with the apostles) the "treasure" in earthen vessels involves the breaking of those vessels, that the light may shine out; that the reception of light from God always necessitates divine dealing with the vessel in order that the will of God may be carried out in a way that magnifies His name (1 Cor. 4: 7-18). The work is not being done by an over-mastering personality that attracts to itself; nor by the adoption of official titles as being this or that kind of servant; but by submission to the will of God. As another remarks: "The true servant is not a promoter; God is the promoter; and He insists that His servant shall do what he is told."

Moses, however, hearing of the impending revolt, and knowing well that the welfare of Israel is not in the minds of the conspirators, turns to God as the One who can deal with the situation: "When Moses heard it, he fell upon his face." There he is assured that God will point out whom He chooses to approach Him in a priestly way. Hence Korah and two hundred and fifty Levites are, each one, to take a censer, put fire and incense thereon, Aaron and his sons doing likewise; and God will declare by fire whom He recognizes in the priesthood.

In the meantime Dathan and Abiram are summoned to a conference with Moses. The latter will do all in

his power to avert trouble; "sweet reasonableness" is the measure of the man. But this evil-minded pair refuse to attend, insinuating that foul play is meditated. They even have the temerity to blame him for their present location in a place that is *not* flowing with milk and honey, in impudent contempt of the fact that they had refused to enter the goodly land when at its very doors.

However, as these men are committed to a course of selfwill, a warning of approaching disaster is proclaimed to those in their vicinity in these words: "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins" (Num. 16: 26). When it says: "So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, on every side," we are not to suppose Korah's tent was in the Reubenite quarters, seeing he was a Kohathite. He was with the "two hundred and fifty" consumed when "there came out fire from the Lord" upon them. But "*the children* of Korah died not" (Num. 26: 11), and in a later day we are told that Psalm 84 is "for the sons of Korah." But the rebellion fostered by Korah is ended. For "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed" Dathan, Abiram, and all those Reubenites who listened to Korah. We observe, however, that the name ON (See 16: 1) is absent from the list of the destroyed, suggesting that he had delivered his soul from the influence of the conspirators. But the destroyed went "down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from the congregation. And all Israel that was round about them fled at the cry of them, for they said, Lest the earth swallow up us also."

Thus is quelled a mutiny that attempts an interference with the right of God to say how He will be approached and how His people shall be governed. That its lesson may not be forgotten, however, God commands that the

censers of the sinners who aspired to the priesthood are to be beaten into broad plates "for a covering of the altar," thereby declaring at the entrance to the tabernacle—to all who will approach God—how He will deal with those who come near to offer incense unlawfully.

"But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord" (Num. 16: 41). Whatever may be its pretence, this issue is really with God. For well do the people know that neither Moses nor Aaron sent fire upon the 250 aspirants to the priesthood, nor caused the earth to swallow the rebels against the form of government instituted of God. The outcry is simply an appalling example of the enmity of the fleshly mind against God. The congregation is really expressing its sympathy with the apostasy of the preceding day, hypocritically voicing a martyr cry against persecution, saying: "*Ye have killed* the people of the Lord." This obstinacy, clothed in religious pretence, invites further wrath that slays 14,700 of the congregation, the ravages of plague only being stayed when Aaron (apprised by Moses that it has begun and can only be stayed by atonement) runs into their midst and puts "incense" on the censer he has taken with fire thereon "from off the altar" and makes atonement, while standing between the dead and the living.

Thus does the law-giver teach that upon the basis of the law the people are doomed, and that only upon the basis of a sacrificial victim's excellency, can they be sustained and conducted to Canaan. His message thus proves to be that of a "schoolmaster" unto Christ (Gal. 3: 25).

Smiting the Rock Twice

The children of Israel now reach a place in "the desert

of Zin" called Kadesh, where Miriam dies and is buried. We shall always remember her as the very clever renderer of help for her baby brother when, as an older sister, she watches the movements of Pharaoh's daughter and, at the proper moment, offers to find a suitable "nurse" for the weeping infant. We recall her when, over ninety, she celebrates the victory of Jehovah at the Red Sea; as dominating Aaron and stirring him up against Moses in her jealousy of Zipporah; as smitten with leprosy, but forgiven and healed when repentant. She has been in the school of God for many a day, has seen many of His wonderful works, and on occasion has given expression to His mind in a timely way, for is she not called "Miriam the prophetess?" She has now passed away.

Still there is no improvement with the people. Complaining of lack of water, "they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron," saying: "Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord," referring to the destruction of the sacrilegious Levites, the entombment of the rebels, and the death by plague of 14,700 malcontents. This latest outcry voices deep-seated impiety. And again they add the usual complaint: "This evil place . . . is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink," as if they had been misled by reports of a non-existent good land (Num. 20: 1-5).

Fortunately, upon retiring with burdened spirits to the door of the tabernacle, Moses and Aaron, having fallen upon their faces, are given audience with the One who can tell them what to do. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall

give forth its water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink." Never was guidance more explicit. But alas! Moses, a man of like passions with ourselves, disobeys the divine command. For, having assembled the congregation, he says: "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of the rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and *with HIS rod he smote the rock twice*: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also."

The disobedience to the divine instructions in this behavior is so abrupt that one cannot but ask: How is it that one so faithful is capable of such transgression? The answer is that, provoked for many years, he not only loses his temper, but does so because at the moment he is out of touch with God. This anger is not that of one sympathizing with God, as formerly when descending from Mount Sinai to discover the nation idolatrous. That was indignation within the bounds of communion with God, going as far as divinely supported; but *this* is selfwill that brings upon its perpetrator exclusion from the promised land. Thus it goes ill with Moses "for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips" (Ps. 106: 32, .33).

In reviewing the matter, we learn that he took the rod "from before the Lord, as the Lord commanded him." It looks as if he intends to do what he is told, for the rod he takes is Aaron's, a rod not adapted for striking purposes. For it had "budded and brought forth buds, and blossomed blossoms, and yielded almonds" (Num.17: 8), setting forth the authority of priesthood *in resurrection*. Thus it is only necessary to "speak to the rock" and there is refreshment in the power of life. Seeing then that Moses has taken this rod, does it not appear that, becoming aggravated at some misconduct before his

eyes, he dispenses with it and *with his own rod* smites the rock twice?

But the Holy Ghost says that the disaster is caused by *unbelief* (Num. 20: 12). We must remember that faith is not credulity; it comes with the entrance of God's word, and brings understanding with it. And through this faith God works through a vessel suited to His purpose. Thus we see that through unbelief Moses fails to be adaptable at the moment when God is ready to impress a great lesson upon His people through His servant. Whereupon He says: "Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." And although afterwards he pleads, saying: "I pray Thee, let me go and see the land," the Lord says: "Speak no more to Me of this matter" (Deut. 3: 23-27). If we may so put it, God speaks with intense feeling on the matter, as if it were too painful to allude to, His few words being the language of one who is "hurt," as we would say. In all this it appears that God would have taken great pleasure in conveying to His people the significance of Aaron's rod, namely, the priesthood of Christ in the power of an endless life taking account of His people's condition and meeting it in grace. But the law-giver resentfully says: "Must *we fetch*" you water out of the rock? Thus when God is ready to exhibit His grace, He is frustrated by His trusted medium of instruction. No doubt His servant's outbreak is provoked inexcusably but, upon investigation, *is revealed as the unbelief* that, ignoring God's viewpoint, leads to conduct that would have been averted had the divine attitude been appreciated.

And may not we learn from this that there is service to be rendered *now*, the opportunity for which may be

forever lost if we fail to apprehend the mind of God. For although we shall learn lessons through eternal ages, they will differ in kind from those of the present day, and our failure to understand or apply the latter must spell irreparable loss. Every Christian who perceives this ought to be thankful he is alive, and endeavor to be adaptable to God's present purpose.

Considered typically, as Moses has already smitten the rock (Exod. 17: 1-7), typifying the death of Christ who "suffered *once*" for sins; when "*once* in the end of the ages" He appeared, and was "*once* offered" to bear the sins of many; it is intolerable to God to be representing as smiting Him a second time. Furthermore, as the law-giver, Moses cannot conduct Israel into the land, for the inheritance is forfeited on that ground, and can only be secured on the ground of divine grace. Therefore it is *Joshua*, whose name means "Jehovah saves," who leads them in.

Shortly after this, Aaron follows Miriam in death, and is disrobed upon Mount Hor, his son Eleazar succeeding him in the high priest's office. For thirty days the people mourn. We shall often visualize him embracing his long-absent brother and listening to his account of the divine appearing and commission. But we cannot forget his artful explanation of the golden calf's emergence from the fire. We are awed at his position when forbidden to weep at the death by flame of his sons Nadab and Abihu. However, we can understand how he is swayed by his strong-willed sister into saying things he ought not, but we are glad at the frankness of his confession when leprosy mantles the offender. He attempts no excuse for himself by blaming her, even if he might have done so. His words ring true, and are blended with compassion, as he says: "Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have

done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half-consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb." Undoubtedly he is submissive in the presence of the holy discipline of God. And we are glad as we remember that the Holy Ghost says, in reference to the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, "They envied Moses in the camp, and *Aaron the saint of the Lord*" (Ps. 106: 16).

Death and Burial

Things are now drawing to a close. Nearing the land once more, after wandering in the wilderness for nearly forty years, Israel again speaks "against God, and against Moses." Among other complaints, they say: "Our soul loatheth this light bread," the manna. For this the Lord sends among them fiery serpents, and they bit the people, "and much people of Israel died." After they acknowledge their sin, Moses is directed to erect a serpent of brass upon a pole, and as many as look to it "live."

As the spiritual significance of this is explained by the Lord in His conversation with Nicodemus, we shall at once consider this. He says: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3: 14, 15). The serpent represents Christ "in the likeness of sinful flesh" as "a sacrifice for sin" (Rom. 8: 3), "made sin for us" although He knew no sin (2 Cor. 5: 21). But the serpent being "brass" and therefore not active, exhibits *the sin judged*. The teaching of this is learned at the "*brazen altar*." Thus what we are according to the flesh is terminated in judgment at the cross, where "our old man" is crucified with Christ, in order that *He* might become the source of our life.

But to return. The time is drawing near when the hosts of Israel shall enter the land of promise, but with-

out the indefatigable leader who has guided them so faithfully, whose faith has been as a shield over them in all their wanderings. For Moses' work is done; he is about to ascend Mount Pisgah at the summons of God. Before his departure, however, he counsels the younger generation that has succeeded the older one, reviewing the path already trodden, pointing out its lessons and warning against disobedience; concluding with a song wherein he pronounces blessings upon those he is leaving behind (Deut. 32: 33). And now, with undimmed eye and firm tread, he ascends the mount where God shows him the goodly land he cannot enter. He hears the words: "This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." Wherefore the faithful "man of God" (Deut. 33: 1), the attentive "servant of the Lord" (Deut. 34: 5) dies and is buried of God "in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." Thus at the age of a hundred and twenty years, ends the life of Moses. And it is said, not only that for thirty days the people "mourn" but "*weep*" for him. They know now that they have lost a shepherd, a father.

The account of his death and burial is found in the fifth and last book of Moses. This may be an appendix inserted by Joshua. On the other hand, Sidney Collett asks: "*Who did write it*, since no one but God and Moses were present at the ceremony? Therefore whoever wrote it must have been inspired. And surely it was as easy for Moses, inspired by God, to write beforehand that brief account of his own death and burial—adding at God's command a statement which should be true for all time: 'No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.' . . . This was as easy as for Joseph,

under inspiration, to foretell what should happen to his bones . . . after his death (Gen. 50: 25), or for Isaiah and other prophets to record not merely the fact, but many striking details concerning the sufferings and death of the Messiah, and even his burial in the 'rich' (Isa. 53: 9) man's tomb (Matt. 27: 57-60). And all this written in *the past tense* as if it were a history of what has already taken place, although the prophecies were actually written 700 years before the event occurred."

It is probable that the allusion in Jude 9 to conflict between Michael the archangel and the devil over the body of Moses, implies an attempt by the adversary to frustrate God's purpose in concealing it from those who might decide at some time to use it for superstitious purposes. Knowing the human urge to enlist tombs, bones, and relics, unlawfully, God prevents its occurrence, exposing it as of satanic origin.

On the conclusion of Moses' life F. W. Grant appropriately says: "Joshua succeeds him as Israel's leader; but as a prophet in the nearness to God to which he was called, he had no successor until He came who in His own Person stood alone, in life, in death, filling all the mediatorial types, and transcending them by the full measure of His infinite glory, in whose light alone they shine."

But although he enters not the pleasant land at this time, fifteen hundred years later, upon the mount of transfiguration, he enters it in company with Elijah, and sees *the King*, to whom he speaks of His "decease" which He would accomplish at Jerusalem. In this way his entrance into the land when the King's glory is manifested, is an earnest of Israel's entrance therein in its millennial glory during the thousand years' reign, called the "world to come" (Eph. 1: 21; Heb. 2: 5; 6: 5), of which the Transfiguration is the "vision" (Matt. 17: 9); an entrance, however, upon the ground of the "decease,"

or departure by way of the cross, at Jerusalem, and not upon the ground of the law. The theocracy of that coming day, with its visible symbolism, will be established upon the basis of the New Covenant. Old Testament promises will be fulfilled in a literal way, upon the ground of the grace of God and not of human merit. For Israel shall then be the "true Israel," converted and fitted to occupy her proper position upon the earth; fulfilling in a new way what it failed to do in the old way; even to set forth the government of God upon the earth. Great spiritual reality though the "Kingdom of God" now is, it is connected with an earth-rejected, heaven-accepted and concealed King. Although its effects are in evidence for all who have eyes to see them, the kingdom itself is invisible. But after "the crowning day that's coming" there will be no arguments as to whether there is or is not a kingdom; it will be as manifest as was the humiliation of the rejected Messiah when Israel said: "We have no king but Caesar." In that divinely assured day, Israel, long debarred from government headship under the broken law, will take her place upon the basis of the redemptive work of their Messiah, her carnal outlook being superseded by the spiritual. All this Moses anticipates in the splendor of the Transfiguration as with Elias he speaks of the "decease" accomplished at Jerusalem, in order to erect the kingdom upon foundations that cannot be destroyed.

As we reflect upon his extraordinary story, we cannot but see how its every epoch, in contrast with those of the heroes of heathendom, has the true human stamp upon it, but all under the sway of God. For instance, how trivial or brutish is the wolf-nursling tale of Rome's founder, beside the tender, true, and very human story of the weeping babe "drawn out" of the Nile, indicative of capacity to sympathize, but all according to divine purpose.

In considering his life as a whole, we can see how faith and obedience—which are substantially one—characterize it. And the breakdown, at his strongest point, is the exception that calls attention to the purpose of heart that was his. Nevertheless, this reminder that he was “of like passions” with ourselves, shows how God loves to work through human vessels made meet for His use, and at the same time enables us to admire the skill of the divine training and the kindness of the divine ways.

With the exception of the apostle Paul we are unaware of any character who compares with this of Moses in understanding, in sympathy with the ways of God, and in zeal for His reputation among mankind. And in his very hesitancy of speech we seem to see a qualification that equips him for his shepherd-service of God’s people, being a kindly *help* by its very restraint upon his impulses, meekest of men though he was, and we may say, necessarily so. Born during the darkest hour of Israel’s distress, when the edict of infant murder is in full force, his very name—when explained to him—serves as a reminder of the relentless *purpose* of the régime he has been rescued from by divine providence, and must have exercised a sort of sub-conscious impression upon him, even when basking in the rays of Egyptian favor as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. And as, notwithstanding Egyptian influence and schooling, he begins to discern more clearly the character of the system he is identified with, he does not hesitate to break with it. For he now understands that the deliverance and arrangement of things through Pharaoh’s daughter, so manifestly of God in a providential way, cannot furnish guidance for his life’s pathway. He perceives that he is being drawn to a higher, the good way, to be voluntarily chosen, if he can but discern it and decide to walk therein. But when he does make the great decision, God interprets it to us as a refusal of “the pleasures of *sin* for a season,” and

declares that his *choice* of fellowship with the afflicted people of God indicates esteem for "the reproach of Christ" as greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; because he is no longer swayed by the illusion of "man's day," but has his eye upon God and His interests, having "respect unto the recompence of the reward."

His writings, although emphasizing diversity in their fivefold structure, are nevertheless a very coherent whole, one complete division of the sacred writings. In Genesis we have "The Beginnings" of things; in Exodus, "Redemption;" in Leviticus, "Approach to and Worship of God;" in Numbers, "The Wilderness Experience;" and in Deuteronomy, "The Recapitulation," or summary, of the divine ways.

Many see in it a model of the structure of the entire Bible as one Pentateuch, showing that Moses' writings are its Genesis, the Historical books its Exodus, the Prophetical books its Leviticus, the Poetical books its Numbers, and (with certain qualifications) the New Testament its Deuteronomy.

Our Lord recognizes the Pentateuch as the writings of Moses, there being citations by Him from each of his books as from his pen and as evincing the authority of God. Thus during His life here He quotes separately from:

Genesis	Matthew 19: 4, 5.
Exodus	Luke 20: 37.
Leviticus	Matthew 8: 4.
Numbers	John 3: 14, 15.
Deuteronomy	Luke 4: 12.

Taking the five books as a whole, the Lord cites them during the days of His flesh as the work of Moses (John 5: 46), and in resurrection does likewise (Luke 24: 27-44). To those who profit by them, he tells in varying form the story of Him who was to come, for, says our Lord, "HE WROTE OF ME."

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