

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)

## ARTICLE VI.

THE NATURAL BASIS OF OUR SPIRITUAL LANGUAGE.<sup>1</sup>

BY REV. W. M. THOMSON, D.D., OF THE SYRIAN MISSION, AUTHOR OF "THE LAND AND THE BOOK."

*Divine Names and Titles.*

THE subject discussed in the previous Article is far from being exhausted, and the present is a continuation of it; with this difference, however, that the names which will now come under consideration have no necessary connection with, or dependence upon, the Theocracy. They may have grown out of it, and have derived much of their significance from it, yet their true basis can be traced to something else in, or belonging to, this land of the Bible: something in the physical features of the country and its productions; in its geographical position and relations; in the manners, customs, and institutions of the people dwelling in it, and in the marvellous incidents which have symbolized its wonderful history. Our present task, therefore, is to ascertain, if we can, by what process of analogy, or otherwise, these common things, and the names for them, became so transfigured from the earthly to the spiritual and the divine, that they could be safely applied to the invisible and incomprehensible God; and when so applied, what is their true significance, what the specific nature and amount of revelation which they contain and teach?

Those who may never have had occasion to make a special study of this subject will probably be somewhat surprised at the number and variety of these divine names. They may even think many of them quite beneath the dignity of the subject, or wanting in due reverence, and some which even violate the requirements of modesty; but it will appear on

<sup>1</sup> This is the third Article of the Series, commenced in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. xxix. p. 1.

examination that none of them can be justly charged with these deviations from propriety, when due allowance is made for the age, the country, and the customs of the people; nay, those most open to the objections referred to (such, for example, as the names, offices, actions, and emotions emanating from the domestic, parental, and conjugal relations) will be found to be eminently beautiful, instructive, and comforting.

It may be thought by some that in the entire course of this discussion too much importance is attached to the matter of mere language. "What is in a name"? Words are but empty air; names are but the exterior and useless shell; the thing signified is the kernel. But this is a very inadequate statement. Language is far more than the mere vesture, or even the vehicle, of thought; it is both parent and nurse of the thought. There is much in a name; most of all in these divine names. They are our teachers and guides, without which we can make no valuable acquisitions in this field of knowledge. They are self-luminous lamps, hung around the infinite mystery of the invisible God, and penetrating the thick darkness in which he dwells, so far as man's feeble sight can pierce. In this sense no part of the Bible is more truly *inspired* than these divine names and titles; and this we propose to establish and illustrate in the course of these Essays. We continue this general subject here and now, because we shall thereby be detained in the society of the inspired poets of the Bible; for it is in the sweet songs of Zion that these names occur most frequently, and in greatest variety. To them, therefore, we resort for examples and illustrations.

It coincides with the general line of our argument to state, and that emphatically, that although the names under consideration were originally ascribed to Jehovah with reference mainly to his Theocratic character and relations, yet the natural basis for them (without which they never would have been thought of) actually existed in Palestine; and the sacred poets were, by providential arrangements, intimately associated with

them in their daily life. The conditions and phenomena which constitute this basis were in themselves, or in their relations true symbols and types, or suggestive figures, adapted and intended to set forth the being, attributes, offices, and operations of the Creator. This idea must reappear in every step of our inquiry.

Avoiding the debatable territory of Comparative Philology, our argument deals with language in its popular acceptation, It does not concern this particular department of our general subject to investigate the linguistic basis of the various names, etc, under consideration, whether Aryan or Turanian, Shemitic or Hamitic, or of any other family of languages. The writer takes them as found full-grown, and familiarly applied in the common parlance of the Hebrew nation, — a people who knew nothing of this new science. Still, though not scientific, our inquiry should be conducted with caution, and even with reverence. We are dealing with language not in its ordinary mundane domain, but as it is the medium divinely selected to reveal to us those aspects of his many-sided character, which can be comprehended, to some extent, by our feeble capacities, and which concern most deeply our religious life and well-being. In this matter *names* are better than definitions; far better than dogmatic propositions, however compact and guarded. The sacred writers appear to have known this, for they never attempt to define the undefinable, or to bound the infinite. On the contrary, they teach that no man hath seen or can see God. By searching none can find out the Almighty to perfection. We, of course, shall not attempt the impossible; but simply seek to discover what particular aspect of this incomprehensible Being is presented by these various names and titles. Each of them turns toward us some special phase of his character for our meditation. This, with what it legitimately includes and implies, is the measure of divine revelation which each communicates; and though surprisingly numerous and varied, there is no superfluous accumulation; but, taken together, they contain and proclaim whatever infinite wisdom deemed necessary for us to know on these weighty

matters. Each, we repeat, contains its specific lesson, different from every other. Thus the word "Shepherd" reveals a side of the divine character quite different from that suggested by *Father*; and so when God is called a Rock, the idea is that of stability and defence, while that implied by Fountain, is refreshment and life. And, not to multiply here examples which will be considered in detail hereafter, we merely mention in passing, that even such kindred titles as Redeemer, Saviour, and the like, had each a separate basis, nor do they embody and set forth exactly one and the same truth. There is a specialty in each, and something there was in this Bible-land which suggested the title, rendered it appropriate, and illustrated its meaning. To discover what that something was, and explain how it embodied and taught the lesson intended — this is our prescribed task. To do this, it is not necessary, perhaps not possible, to adhere strictly to any regular and rigid system. The sacred writers did not. Could we ascertain the time, conditions, and circumstances when they were first employed — *invented* — we might probably examine them with greater satisfaction, and with better success. But this, in most cases, is impossible. Their origin is lost in the darkness of remote antiquity. Notice, however, that as revelation advances, there is a steady progress towards the more spiritual manifestation of the divine character, so that when the fulness of time came that the Word should be made flesh, and dwell amongst us, the names and titles under consideration became also more emphatically spiritual, and less encumbered and obscured by mundane conditions.

Let us now pass from these general remarks to special examples; reminding the reader that many of these divine names were suggested by, or derived their significance from, certain physical features of Palestine, or from something connected with them. In a single verse of the eighteenth Psalm there is quite a group of such titles. "The Lord is my *rock* and my *fortress*, my God, my *strength* (or *rock*, but a different original) in whom I will trust; my *buckler*, and the *horn of my salvation*, and my *high tower*." Take these

in order. The Lord is my *rock*; what is the idea? That of steadfast, impregnable strength. True, but not every strong thing is a fit synonyme for God. How came this to be selected? Notice that this is not the first time we meet it. Moses, long before, in his parting song, which he spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel, repeatedly calls God a *rock*: "Ascribe ye greatness to our God the rock" (vs. 4); and again in the fifteenth verse, "Rock of his salvation," and in the nineteenth, "the Rock that begat thee," and once more, in the thirtieth, and thirty-first, "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." Now there were things and incidents in the life and experience of both Moses and David which explain this partiality for, and fond repetition of, this title. Both had been driven out from home and friends, and found refuge and rest among rocks. Moses among the stupendous defiles of Horeb and Sinai, and David amidst the cavernous cliffs of Southern Palestine. Moses could not fail to notice, and to express the analogy between the rocky ramparts of Sinai, and him who came down upon them in such awful might and majesty; and so David, in the day when the Lord had delivered him from all his enemies, could not look forth from the heights of Zion southward over the region of his early wanderings, dangers, and escapes without beholding many a "rock of salvation," upon which, or in whose clefts, he had found refuge from Saul and other enemies. Beyond most countries, Southern Palestine abounds in such natural fortresses, high hills, and "horns of salvation." Many of them were rendered more conspicuous and secure by artificial walls and towers. The traveller through those regions sees with surprise the remains of those ancient works crowning many a wild crag and mountain-top. They tell of times of lawless violence and oppression, when such "horns of salvation" were needed, and in such an age (history says it was) David, flying from the insane jealousy of king Saul, sought and found protection and rest among them. His poetic imagination would quickly discover the analogy between these natural fortresses, and him who was

greater than a rock and high tower. They were to him expressive symbols of God, in whom he trusted, and it is therefore no way surprising to hear him sing so often and so sweetly of them. The names and titles of Jehovah, suggested by them, set forth in fit emblem that aspect of his character from which he derived the greatest comfort in times of utmost danger and despondence. The same general idea is expressed in many other parts of the Bible, and similar names occur very often, frequently connected with additions, beautiful and suggestive. Now, as was to be expected, these have all been transferred to our own spiritual hymnology. Toplady has sweetly blended several of them in his familiar hymn :

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee."

It would be superfluous, also tedious, to develop in detail this class of divine titles. They are familiar to every Biblical student, and mingle with all his devotions, both public and private.

The word "buckler" belongs to quite a different group of symbols, applied sometimes to God, as in the eighteenth Psalm, and elsewhere to set forth the Christian life in its militant aspect. In either application the word is appropriate, and the idea plain and comforting. God is the true shield and buckler, covering the head, and shielding the person of the spiritual combatant; and the material implement points naturally to him, as indeed does the entire panoply, which Paul calls the "armor of God," which the Christian soldier is to wear and wield. These, and kindred terms in our spiritual vocabulary, were derived from, or suggested by, the social condition and sad experience of the Hebrew nation in Palestine. They were environed by cruel enemies, and every man had to be a soldier, armed at all points, and ever on his guard; a condition itself providential, eminently symbolical and richly suggestive. We could safely assume that the religious language of a people thus conditioned would abound in figures and phrases drawn from this source; and would be entirely different had they dwelt in some peaceful Arcadia, where no enemy lurked, and war was unknown. But this is not exactly the

question in hand; and we shall have occasion hereafter to consider in detail the wide subjects of war, armor, and kindred topics, and need not anticipate.

The phrase "horn of salvation" will bear some additional illustration. If left entirely to our ingenuity to discover the natural basis for this divine title from its connection in this Psalm, we should find it in those conical hills which form so conspicuous a feature in the scenery of Southern Palestine. Such hills, or cones, are actually called *horns* by Orientals, and many of them bear a sufficiently close resemblance to the short, thick horns of Bashan's famous bulls to suggest and to justify the comparison, especially when crowned by lofty watch-towers. Nor is the analogy between those *hill-horns*, and the watchful providence of God, either obscure or far-fetched. God is the true "horn of salvation" for his people, their watch-tower to give warning of approaching danger, and afford immediate protection from it; but this title was probably derived from ancient altars, the raised corners of which were called horns. Temples, and especially the altars within them, were regarded as sanctuaries, and the greatest criminal, if he could but reach the temple, and lay hold of the altar, was for the time safe. There are many striking examples of this fact in biblical history. These corners of the altar were, in a very literal sense, "horns of salvation," and sure to be thus named. To the devout Hebrew, however, Jehovah was the only reliable sanctuary, and these material objects were but significant symbols pointing to him.

But temples and altars were not the only things familiar to the Hebrews which symbolized this attribute of their God. The cities of refuge did the same, by loud proclamation, and in every detail of their marvellous institution. The barbarous custom of blood-revenge furnished the occasion, and call for them; and this custom was so deeply rooted in the hearts and habits of the people, that Moses even, armed with divine authority, could not wholly abolish it; he was therefore instructed to adopt this scheme of refuge-cities to limit its operation, and mitigate its barbarity. Six cities were set apart for

this purpose, so selected and distributed throughout the country as to furnish a safe retreat within reach of the unfortunate manslayer. Without entering into the details regarding the roads to them, and the facilities devised to render these *refuges* available, it is manifest that they must have had a significance, and a preciousness in those times of savage revenge which it is impossible for us fully to appreciate. This thought was brought home to the personal consciousness of the writer, in a manner more forcible than agreeable, when travelling in Palestine many years since, during a time of general disturbance and anarchy. He was passing up the long vale of Mūkhna, south of Nablūs, the site of one of those refuge-cities, when a gang of wild Bedaween were seen swooping down upon us from the eastern hills. It was, therefore, with emotions of joy and thankfulness, not to be expressed, that he reached the opening between Ebal and Gerizim, and fled into the open gates of the city. Our party presented no bad picture of the man-slayer flying in terror to this same city — the *go'el* with dagger drawn, in hot pursuit behind him. Nor is this the only instance in modern times when these gates of Nablūs have been sought with like eagerness, as the only available refuge from the spear of lawless Arabs who infest that neighborhood.

If Talmudic tradition be true (and if not, it ought to be), that the highways to these cities were kept in good repair, and guide-boards, with the word "REFUGE" written in large letters upon them, were planted wherever hesitation or mistake was possible, then we should have all the conditions needed to suggest the application of the name to God, and to enhance immeasurably its significance. It is possible that this name, "refuge," was first applied to God by some fainting fugitive in despair of reaching such a sanctuary. Be this as it may, we may safely assert that, with these conditions existing and co-operating, just this title would assuredly be given to Jehovah, and would become most precious to the hearts of his people. Moreover, it would be quickly spiritualized. The convicted sinner would represent the man-

slayer, conscience, armed with the sword of divine justice, the "goëil," and Jehovah-Jesus the only available Refuge ; and thus the Christian poet sings :

" Dear Refuge of my weary soul,  
     On thee, when sorrows rise,  
 On thee, when waves of trouble roll,  
     My fainting hope relies."

Closely related to the idea of Refuge is that of Redeemer. This name has become so intimately associated with the second person of the Trinity, as almost to supersede all others. In every act of worship we think of, pray to, and praise the ever-blessed Redeemer ; this we do without knowing, or needing to know, how the name came to be applied to the Son of God ; and yet the conditions which originated it, are not only easily ascertained, but they beautifully illustrate its specific meaning. Both the act and the actor—redemption, and Redeemer, were perfectly familiar to the writers of the Bible. Palestine is surrounded by vast deserts, then as now, infested by lawless robbers, kidnapers, men-stealers, who often made inroads into the territory, carrying captive all they could lay hands upon. The redemption of these miserable slaves was esteemed a most sacred duty ; and he who ventured forth on this perilous errand of mercy was held in highest honor among the people. To go forth, ransom in hand, to the dens of these robbers, find out these wretched captives, purchase their freedom, and restore them to their homes, was indeed the most noble act of charity, and justly entitled him who did it to the name of redeemer. Here is the natural basis of the name ; and the devout Hebrew would at once discover a beautiful analogy between this act and its actor, and man's moral redemption and him who accomplished it. They well knew, and deeply felt, that there is a slavery more wretched and ruinous than that of Midian or of Amalek, and a redemption far more precious and costly than that from the bondage of Egypt, purchased by a Redêemer infinitely more glorious and exalted.

In a sense more comprehensive, but not less real, we remember that the whole Hebrew nation had been often reduced to

abject bondage, and Jehovah had interfered directly, not seldom miraculously, for their deliverance. He had wrought out salvation for them, and restored them to their inheritance. He was, therefore, in a sense quite peculiar their Redeemer, and most justly claims the title, and all that belongs to it. In the single book of Isaiah, it is thus applied more than twenty times.

It is not necessary to spend time in minutely describing the various kinds of redemption known to, and practised amongst the Jews, in accordance with the Mosaic ritual. Redemption of inheritance, and restoration to the original owner; redemption of the first-born; redemption from punishment deserved, from prison, from death, etc., etc. It accords with our general purpose, however, to mark with special emphasis that each and all illustrate the various and manifold offices of our blessed Lord, in his complex character of spiritual Redeemer for the whole human race. Cast forth from his original estate, taken captive by the Devil, sold under sin, condemned to death, and shut up in the dungeon of despair, Christ comes forth from the bosom of the Father, assumes man's place, bears his penalty, and himself alone pays the full price of complete redemption. He has conquered our enemy, broken the yoke of bondage, opened the prison doors, brought home the captive, pardoned the condemned, given life to the dead, and more than restored our lost inheritance. There is hence no name under heaven among men so precious to the child of God as Redeemer; nor is there any other aspect of our Lord's adorable character upon which he so delights to expatiate. And though suggested by the peculiar condition and experience of the Hebrews, and by them best illustrated, yet is it a name easily understood, and fully appreciated in its spiritual import, by Christians of every age and country. They may never have witnessed any of those barbarities on which it is based, nor have been conversant with a state of society where such acts of redemption were needed, or were even possible, yet the analogies are so pertinent and so plain, that even a child can comprehend them. It only remains for us, in passing, to

remind the reader that out of this name, and what it suggests and implies, has been derived an immense number of spiritual words and phrases, which have become the cherished possession of the Christian world.

Having dwelt so largely on the preceding title of our Lord, it will not be necessary to spend much time in illustrating the basis and import of the kindred name, Saviour; kindred, but not identical; for, although salvation and redemption are so closely related that the terms are often employed as verbal equivalents, yet the name Saviour presents a somewhat different phase of our Lord's character and offices from that of Redeemer, and was suggested by different conditions, acts, and divine interpositions. The national history of the Jews is marked, beyond that of all other people, by a marvellous succession of such works of salvation, as in the plagues of Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, and other like events too numerous to mention. These temporal deliverances were generally wrought by the hands of human saviours, raised up when needed, and divinely fitted for their mission. Joseph and Moses, Joshua and Samson, Samuel and David, and many others are pertinent examples. All these were, in a subordinate sense, saviours, and were so regarded and named by a grateful people; but the real author of their deliverance was Jehovah, and since the whole Jewish economy was typical, with reference to a higher spiritual kingdom, all these national salvations, and those by whom they were wrought, were types of a spiritual work higher and more glorious, and of its divine Author. The import and real significance of the whole series of these temporal salvations and saviours, find their complete and ultimate expression in the person and work of our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; neither is there salvation in any other. Our hymnology overflows with the joyful theme:

"O could I speak the matchless worth,  
 O could I sound the glories forth,  
     Which in my Saviour shine!  
 I'd soar and touch the heavenly strings,  
 And vie with Gabriel while he sings,  
     In notes almost divine."

The name Mediator is derived from, or rests upon, a different basis from the two preceding titles. It resulted naturally from certain customs, singularly prevalent in these Oriental nations. Beyond all others in the world, I believe, these people have recourse to mediation and mediators on all occasions, ordinary and extraordinary. They seem incapable of transacting business without their intervention. You cannot buy a donkey, rent a house, hire a servant, get a wife, settle a dispute, or do anything else, except through these ever-present go-betweens. Were we disposed to enter upon such speculations, it would not be difficult to discover some of the causes, at least, of this prevalent custom; but time forbids, and sufficient for our purpose be it to state the fact. It is not a new, modern fashion, but appears even in the early history of the Patriarchs; in the purchase of Macphelah, in the story of Joseph, in the domestic tragedies of David, and in numberless other instances. "Speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me," was the prayer of a worldly follower of Jesus; and similar petitions would be made by ten thousand nominal disciples of to-day, were our Lord dwelling amongst us in this land. Such being the custom in transacting temporal affairs, it becomes the most natural thing in the world to resort to mediation and mediators in the all-important matter of religion. He who *knows not how* to act directly with his neighbor, will certainly seek some days-man between himself and his God. And, indeed, the relations between man and his Maker being such as sin has made them, the reluctance and the dread of dealing personally with him are both natural and becoming. Moreover, it was the specific design of the ceremonial and sacrificial institutions of the Mosaic economy to inculcate just this fundamental truth: that man must not appear before the Lord, except through a mediator. The priests in the Tabernacle and the Temple, stood in this relation, officially and by divine appointment. But even they could only mediate typically, by offering sacrifices which were of no avail, except as they pointed to the one true Mediator, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. It

would require volumes to develop adequately this pregnant subject, but we can only glance at, and leave it; for our Essay threatens to expand, in many directions, to limits altogether inadmissible. We cannot, however, dismiss this study of the divine names, without calling attention to several that are found more particularly, though not exclusively, in the New Testament.

Some of the names and titles now referred to are furnished by our Lord himself, in his numerous parables. In one, he is a householder who planted a vineyard, hedged it about, built a tower in it, and let it out to husbandmen (Matt. xxi. 33-41). Again, he is a traveller into a far country, who distributes his goods to his servants; five talents to one, two to another, and to a third, one talent (Matt. xxv. 14). In the parable of the ten virgins, he is the bridegroom, coming at midnight to the marriage supper. And, again, he is the owner of a vineyard, hiring laborers, and paying those who entered at the eleventh hour the same as those who had borne the heat and toil of the whole day, etc. We need not complete the catalogue; for although all these parables abound in allusions to things and customs Oriental, and although, what is more to our present purpose, our religious nomenclature has been largely enriched from them, not only with divine titles, but also with a multitude of other words, phrases, and significant imagery, yet there is no call to dwell upon them here. Innumerable writers have illustrated and explained them in works common and accessible to all. We notice, however, in passing, that they fairly belong to our theme, since they are based upon, and form part of those pre-arranged conditions, one design of which was to receive just this contribution. Indeed it may be said (and without presumption), that the Great Teacher could not, certainly would not, have spoken of the kingdom of heaven, and of himself as its king, as he did, if the things upon which are based these parables had not been in actual existence in this land, and familiar to the people. For example, there must have been, and there were, just such *householders*, who planted vineyards, made hedges

about them, digged wine-presses, built towers for protection, and then let them out to husbandmen. We still find the dilapidated terraces, broken hedges, sunken wine-vats, and crumbling towers of those ancient vineyards. So of all the parables. They were not built upon fiction, but had an underlying basis of actual fact. The Divine Teacher had no need to draw on imagination. The realities were all around him, gathered into this small land of Palestine, not by accident, but by providential design, working towards this very result under discussion.

The parables of the marriage supper and of the ten virgins bring into view so many spiritual names and relations that they will bear farther development with reference to the main purpose of these Essays. Much of our religious language was derived, directly or indirectly, from the marriage institution. Ideas and names, figures and phrases, based upon, or connected with it, are met with very early in the sacred writings, and this continued down to the very last paragraph in the Apocalypse. One entire book, the Song of Songs, is founded upon it; and throughout the Bible its influence is continually manifested, and references to it abound, with a freedom and minuteness of detail which mere human wisdom would never have suggested or sanctioned. Jehovah is the husband, or the bridegroom; and his people, collectively, are the bride, the wife. He claims the authority, reverence, and rights of husband, as acknowledged and prescribed by the customs of society in this land; and he insists with jealous, and even terrible, earnestness upon the faithful performance of the duties devolving upon the bride. Of course, all this is to be taken in a mystic sense, broadly distinguished from the mere human relation. But, in evolving from this institution the character of Jehovah, and the near and endearing relations which he sustains to his church—the Lamb's wife—there is a fearless (and to human ignorance) even a dangerous descent into the most delicate details. The idea would never have occurred to a modern mind, especially in western lands, and, if suggested, could scarcely have been

tolerated. Certainly it would have been carried out with timidity and great reserve. Indeed, we can hardly venture to breathe in our closets many of these allusions, even though they have been uttered by the Holy Ghost, or have fallen from the lips of the Great Teacher himself. But biblical writers seem wholly unconscious of this difficulty, and handle the matter with a daring anthropomorphism which utterly stumbles modern fastidiousness.

The basis of all these spiritual terms is obvious enough. It lies in the very nature of the marriage institution—the close, exclusive, affectionate, and permanent connection between husband and wife. And although much of this religious nomenclature grows naturally out of the mere relation, as known to, and practised by, all nations; yet a considerable part, and that the most specific and significant, is best understood and illustrated by reference to the manners and customs matrimonial which prevailed in this Bible-land in Bible times. For instance, the terms based upon marital headship and exclusive authority. To an Oriental even now this is natural and appropriate. The husband is lord and master in a very literal and practical sense. It is no mere figure of speech, introduced with bated breath, or omitted altogether in the ceremony. The wife is absolutely subject and dependent. The husband both gives the law, and administers it. We are not thinking of Christian marriage, modified by modern ideas, but of the true Oriental theory and practice.

Again, though marriage is nowhere a relation of birth, but, at least supposed to be, one of consent and contract, yet in the Oriental idea the parties are by no means regarded as equals. The husband seeks and chooses, the wife accepts, willingly or otherwise—not seldom otherwise. This, however, is contrary to the theory. The Oriental husband pays a stipulated sum for the wife—purchases his bride in fact. So the church, the Lamb's wife, is purchased by the life-blood of the heavenly Bridegroom: "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." Again, the Oriental husband always brings his wife to his own home, separates her from her

parents, her people, and from every one else. Henceforth she is secluded, and guarded with jealous anxiety by himself. She must not associate with other men, nor even be seen by them. In such manner spiritualized, the Lord is the mystic husband. He separates his elected, loved ones, from their former relations and companions. They are to know no other master but him; no other love but his. He is to reign supreme and alone; and hence the idea of divine jealousy aroused by idolatry. When the bride forgets, grows indifferent to, or actually violates, the mystic covenant, Jehovah allows himself to be spoken of, nay, he represents himself, as inflamed by the most vehement jealousy, acting, too, just as human husbands did, and still do, under such circumstances. There are many extended passages, especially in the prophets, entirely based upon this aspect of the marriage relation; and, if some of them shock the modesty of modern refinement, let it be remembered that the divine intention was to work out by these painful details such an expression of the utter abomination of idolatry as would astound and terrify the hearts of his people. He intended that these pictures should be intolerably loathsome. The only additional remark which needs to be made on this part of the subject is, that many of these words and phrases, originating in this element of the marriage institution, are so peculiarly Oriental, that they could neither have been invented, used, nor understood, where these conditions and customs were unknown.

This subject is not yet exhausted. There are now countries boasting of high Christian refinement, where young women rejoice in achieving matrimony, as the magna charta of personal emancipation. They are then, and thereby, free to go where, and do what they please. According to these modern notions and customs, young ladies employ every possible art and artifice to charm and attract; but, having attained their object, they may then, and thereafter, cease to care much about their personal appearance at home, and before their husbands. This is utterly antagonistic to the Biblical idea of the institution, and totally *reverses* the con-

ditions which suggested so many beautiful thoughts and phrases in spiritual nomenclature. The Oriental wife is expected to adorn her person far more than the unmarried girl; *but it is for the eye of her husband*, to attract his love, and render it secure and abiding. In many parts of this Bible-land it is even yet a serious reflection on the moral character of any girl to have it said that she was fond of adorning her person. The writer is acquainted with large circles of respectable people among whom girls are supposed not even to wash their faces until they are to be married; but after that grand event they load themselves with gold and pearls, multiply gay garments, paint their pale faces, dye their eye-brows with kohle and their hands with hennah, and thus blossom forth in all the arts of female adornment. In theory this is all pure homage to the husband, to honor his taste, gratify his pride, and win his admiration and love. This is the biblical idea: "He is thy lord, and worship thou him"; and thus it was that the bride, in the Song of Songs, is represented as charming home her royal spouse.

Now, to discover how largely our spiritual language has been enriched from this source, one needs only listen to the ordinary devotions of devout Christians in private or in public, or turn over the pages of any of our "books of praise." The entire religious life of multitudes is pervaded with this ardent atmosphere. In it they move, breathe, and have their being. And this in them is not only natural, but it is beautiful. The loving heart finds no other terms adequate to give expression to its emotions; and we should be thankful that divine wisdom has, with infinite skill and condescension, taught us this sweet language of the heart, and sanctified it. The dialect of the "kingdom of heaven" would have been many degrees colder without it, with one entire zone of man's moral nature lying uncultivated, to be overgrown with stinging thistles and noxious weeds. One is tempted to pause here, and quote at large from psalm and song, from prophecy and parable and Apocalyptic visions, by way of illustration. But time and space forbid; and we pass away from this topic

with the brief remark that polygamy vitiates the whole marriage institution ; and thoughts, words, and phrases based upon it, if introduced into our spiritual nomenclature, would throw the whole into harsh disharmony and confusion. In the beginning it was not so. They *twain*, not they *twenty*, shall be one flesh ; my beloved is *one*.

Finally, we remark that the character of our Lord is so many sided, and his relations to his church so complex, intimate, and endearing, that no combination of mere abstract phrases can adequately express them. Hence acts and facts and things, and institutions and histories, and phenomena in heaven and earth, must be laid under contribution, to gather from the whole a vocabulary sufficiently copious, varied, and significant to meet the demands of this department of divine revelation. And as the family constitution, created, guarded, and made permanent by marriage, is the most important institution known to man, it would, of course, be employed in this service ; nor must modern reserve on such subjects be allowed to pronounce judgment against the manner in which the Spirit of inspiration has evolved so large a portion of our religious language.

Intimately connected with the preceding topic is that of the *parental* relation, and a moment's reflection will recall many precious words and phrases which come to us from this source. Moses early taught the Hebrews to call God their Father ; and Isaiah exclaims : " Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer." Expostulating with treacherous Judah, Malachi asks : " Have we not all one Father ?" and again : " A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master. If I be a father, where is mine honor ; and if I be a master, where is my fear ?" It is in the New Testament, however, that this endearing name becomes specially prominent. Our blessed Lord taught his disciples to pray after this manner : " Our Father which art in heaven " ; and with this name on their lips do all Christians approach the mercy-seat. Into the

name of the *Father*, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are we all baptized. We need not pause to enumerate the many beautiful analogies which the mere name suggests; but, leaving these for each one to develop for himself, we call attention to certain peculiarities in the parental relation, as known and administered in this country, which rendered this divine title specially appropriate and significant. One of these was the unlimited authority claimed and exercised by the father. In ancient times he was substantially king, lawgiver, judge, and executive officer in the family; and, superadded to this tremendous array of offices and attributes, he was clothed with all the reverence which belonged to the mysterious and awful function of priest. We need not claim for this system of social economy any special approbation, may even admit that it was liable to great abuse, and not adapted to a highly developed civilization. Still, the ancient head of an Oriental household, venerable and venerated, was a far better representative type of the Supreme, than is the father of many a family in Christian lands. Too many of them might well take up the complaint of Malachi: "If I be a father, where is mine honor."

Again, this parental headship and power were far more permanent than in modern times in most civilized countries. The *pater-familias* never, while life lasted, abdicated his authority, but reigned supreme over young and old, married and unmarried, to the third and fourth generation. All lived within the same homestead, or encampment. The aged patriarch was still master, and his sanction was necessary on all important occasions. He was also responsible for the protection and the maintenance of the whole tribe, or for devising and carrying into effect the measures necessary for the attainment of these ends. The history of the Hebrew patriarchs presents striking pictures of this domestic economy, and from them, and such as them, have been evolved many beautiful thoughts, figures, and phrases, by which to render more becoming and acceptable worship to our "Father which is in heaven."

From this conception of the parental character of God, spring whole classes of relations, privileges, and blessings, with corresponding rights, duties, and obligations; and the best possible verbal formulas to give expression of them. The analogies are so transparent, the transfer from the natural to the spiritual so direct and easy, that we are scarcely conscious of the mental process by which it is effected. If God be our Father, then to him are due all our reverence, love, and obedience, as recognized and claimed in the first and greatest of the commandments — to love the Lord with all the heart, soul, strength, and mind. And the second is like unto the first — to love one's neighbor as one's self; for, have we not all one Father? Upon this fundamental fact rests the great law of universal brotherhood. Every man is his brother's keeper; bound to aid, defend, and love him. So taught the Master in the parable of the good Samaritan, and elsewhere. Are we children of one common parent; then should we dwell together in our Father's house in harmony and peace, cultivating, and exercising towards all, kindness, sympathy, patience, charity, and whatsoever else is beneficial and of good report.

Again, upon this relation between God and man rests the obligation to possess and to manifest the same character in our measure and degree. Is our Father in heaven good and true and kind and patient and merciful, then should his children be the same, and imitate his example. And it is thus that the divine nature is actually revealed to us: "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." "What man is there of you who if his son ask bread will he give him a stone? for a fish will he give a serpent, or a scorpion instead of an egg? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Thus, and not otherwise, did the Great Teacher propound, expand, and apply the momentous and consolatory truth that God is our Father.

It belongs to the commentator and the preacher to develop

in detail the manifold relations and bearings of this most comprehensive of divine titles ; and we can find space for a mere glance at some of them, and this, to indicate most briefly, the rich contributions to our religious language which spring from it. As was to be expected, these were vastly multiplied, and breathed their deepest and sweetest meanings under the Christian dispensation. As Christianity expanded and matured under the guidance of inspired apostles and evangelists, the spiritual nomenclature of the kingdom was marvellously enriched from this source. Nor are these contributions limited to terms derived from the blessings, rights, and privileges of the sons of God ; but include such as refer to that watch, care, restraint, teaching, and discipline which parents use and bestow upon their children. It is in this domain that man most needs help. A large part of his moral education can only be received in the school of temptation and affliction—a kind of discipline not joyous, but the contrary ; yet the harvest of peaceful fruits can only be reaped from seed thus sown in tears. Now, what we aim to set forth by these remarks is simply this : that from this school, established and taught by himself in this land of the Bible, our Father in heaven intended, amongst other ends, to evolve a spiritual language by which his feeble children could hold sweet converse with himself. Nor has his purpose failed. The means employed were adequate to achieve the result sought. He established this educational institution in this land of the prophets, poets, inspired and holy apostles, and brought his selected pupils into it to be trained. Many lessons were taught ; and, among others, something was learned in regard to the *deep mystery of pain*, and of that which makes it a necessity. Jeremiah, the man that had seen affliction by the rod of his wrath, had learned in this school, that “ though he causes grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies ; for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” The same thought an apostle takes up and amplifies for the comfort and edification of all sons and daughters of affliction :

“My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastisement, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of our spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness” (Heb. xii. 5-10). We give the above, rather long quotation, to show what an inspired apostle develops out of this one aspect of the fatherhood of God. Is it not clear that without the human relation, as known to prophet and apostle in this home of the Bible, the above beautiful cluster of spiritual thoughts and words would have been an impossible revelation?

We must now pass away from the specific study of the divine names, but with the remark, as at the beginning of this Essay, that the theme is far from exhausted. We have scarcely entered the boundless domain of titles, sacred to the Son of God. But,

“Join all the glorious names  
Of wisdom, love and power,  
That ever mortals knew,  
That ever angels bore,  
All are too mean to speak his worth,  
Too mean to set the Saviour forth.”

“Jesus! my shepherd, guardian, friend,  
My prophet, priest, and king,  
My Lord, my life, my way, my end,  
Accept the praise I bring.”

On some future occasion (and there will be many all along the path we tread) we may return to this delightful, unexhausted, inexhaustible theme.

In closing the present Essay, it is perhaps incumbent to give one glance (and it must be a hurried one) at quite a different aspect of the divine character, and at those names

and titles judicial, which present its severer side to our contemplation. We cannot now enter at any length upon this important branch of the general subject. All familiar with the Bible know that our religious vocabulary has been greatly enlarged from this source ; and can, without prompting, recall the occasions and circumstances, miraculous and otherwise, which constitute their basis. Such, in kind, are the histories of Noah and the deluge, of Lot and the cities of the plain, of Pharaoh and the plagues of Egypt, of Sinai and the murmuring and rebellious Hebrews, of Joshua and the conquest of Canaan, and a multitude of simliar works and manifestations. But our limits require us to turn now to other topics, and we dismiss the entire catalogue of names, titles, and terms, forensic and judicial, with the remark that they cover the most mysterious and awful arena in the entire scheme of divine revelation — one which mere human reason is utterly incompetent to deal with. To adjust and represent truly and safely the aspects of inflexible justice, in a system whose fundamental aim and essence, whose very *raison d'être* is a manifestation of love and mercy infinite, could only be done by its Divine Author. We may, and must, conclude that the methods adopted were the best possible, if not the only ones, by which even Jehovah could adequately reveal these awful aspects of his incomprehensible character. He has chosen to do this through the agency of numberless exhibitions of these attributes severe, operating in visible, miraculous, appalling judgments. The narration of these things embodies all, or nearly all, our knowledge in this abyss of deepest mystery, and also the vocabulary of names and terms by which it can be reverently studied and safely propounded. And let us not fail to notice that the conditions, circumstances, and occasions which evoked these manifestations of divine wrath were not accidental, but pre-arranged by him whose thoughts and ways are high as heaven above ours. The comprehensive conclusion and ultimate result of the whole study is beautifully condensed in the ninety-seventh Psalm : “ Clouds and darkness are round about him ; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”