

EXODUS

by the same author

GOSPEL OF JOHN

PETER

THE WAY INTO THE HOLIEST

TRIED BY FIRE

CHRIST IN ISAIAH

THE PROPHET OF HOPE

OUR DAILY WALK

OUR DAILY HOMILY

EXODUS

Chapters XX (v 22)–XL

F. B. Meyer

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The Text of the Book of Exodus is from the Authorised Version. Quotations in the Commentary are in many cases from the Revised Version.

I

THE SUMMONS TO WORSHIP

EXODUS xx. 22-26

22. And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

23. Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

24. An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

25. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

26. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

I

THE SUMMONS TO WORSHIP

EXODUS xx. 22-26

The Covenant. Here begins the first paragraph in the Book of the Covenant which continues through the following chapters to xxiii. 19. The contents were communicated to Moses on the Mount, at the request of the people: "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." Moses wrote all the words of the Lord in a book, and afterwards took the blood of sacrifices and sprinkled it on the people.

The Code of Laws. This book was therefore the first draft or nucleus of the Book of Exodus, as we now have it. There is much in it of most significant value, as bearing on the early history of the Hebrew people, and on ourselves. As to the former, we may say, in the words of Professor Maitland, "There can, so we think, be no doubt that the stage of civilization of which these laws speak to us is marvellously high. This may be the oldest Code of Laws in the world; but it is very far from being the most archaic."

Their Origin. It may be that these commands are really a codification of laws which had been handed down to Israel from the days of their fathers. It may be that they had been in vogue not only through the Egyptian bondage, but in the tents of Abraham. Here they are presented in a succinct and impressive form, with the solemn sanctions of Jehovah and the ratification of the people's voice. Moses probably set forth in them the principles on which he had been accustomed to administer justice, and the principles on which his co-assessors were to administer it.

Their Authority. But there was an altogether new authority communicated to these "judgments," or *decisions*, by the fact that God had announced them, and the people had received them, as

the basis of their national life. "The gold had been lying about before, but it was now collected and coined into the currency of the kingdom. Old coins had been gathered in. All had now passed through the mintage of the Heavenly Sovereign, and bore the image and superscription of the King of the new theocracy."

The first of the three chapters contains laws regarding the person, the next laws regarding property, and the third miscellaneous laws, mostly regarding religious observances.

Ordinances as to Worship. Here in the forefront of all stand these ordinances as to worship. There is repeated the prohibition of the manufacture of idols, and the worship of Jehovah under the symbolism of either Egypt or Assyria. Then follows the injunction for the altar of earth on which burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were to be offered. As yet the place of Divine Worship had not been fixed, and would not be, until God placed the tent of Shiloh amongst His people. But in the interim these provisions were made for the erection of an altar at which the devout worshipper might approach the Heavenly Father. The patriarchal altars had evidently been of this description, and it was now provided that the same usage should continue. Elaborate structures of hewn and decorated stonework were not allowed, lest the objects carved on the stones should become objects of idolatrous worship.

The Offering. The burnt-offering of course stands for our entire surrender and consecration to God; whilst the peace-offering was a sacramental meal, in which the worshipper ate of the same sacrifice with his God (Lev. i and iii). The sacrifices offered by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been of this character, because the sacrifices which bespoke atonement were not as yet permitted to be offered by ordinary men. They awaited the further development of the Priesthood and the Ritual, to which the following pages bear witness.

Let us deeply ponder the suggestion of this initial paragraph, that worship stands in the forefront of our relationships to God, and to each other. "In the beginning, God."

The Idea of Worship: The Sinai Stage. There were several stages in the development of the idea of worship among the Hebrew people. The first may be summarised as that of *Sinai*. When the mighty God descended there, clouds brooded over it, as we have seen, with forked lightning glancing to and fro amid the blackness, darkness, and tempest. Even Moses said, as he approached it, "I

do exceedingly fear and quake." Very few of the children of men have had so pure a bosom as Moses, the man who seems to have been raised above the rank and file of men into a spirituality and purity of which the virgin peaks of Sinai were a symbol, and if the effect on his nature was so awe-inspiring, what must not have been that revelation of the Divine Majesty!

—**In Modern Life.** But are there not some lives still that are represented by Sinai? They are always living under the brooding cloud, their religious sentiments are full of dread, their experience is sombre, dark, and uninviting. For them death is the leaving behind of the sunny landscape, and the threading of a dreary mountain pathway to the lonely desolations of Sinai, with its thunder and storm. It is not impossible that the words of Moses aptly describe your own life. "I exceedingly fear and quake when I come in contact with a religious man, and I do my best to avoid him; I exceedingly fear and quake when a religious subject is quoted in my proximity; I exceedingly fear and quake when I anticipate the act of death; I exceedingly fear and quake at the thought of living for ever. Religion is a burden, sorrow, and torment to me." Ah, any who speak thus need to ponder *over*, and ask God's inward teaching on those words of the Apostle: "The Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John i. 14, 16). Directly you see that God was more perfectly revealed in the winsomeness of Jesus than in the terror of Sinai, you will pass in a moment from the Sinai conception of worship.

The Shiloh Stage. God next recorded His Name in *Shiloh*. "The whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting (i.e. the Tabernacle) there" (Joshua xviii. 1). Shiloh stands for the worship in symbol and outward form. The tabernacle, with its two sanctuaries, the holy and the most holy, the ark and altar, the veil and outer court, the high-priest and the priests, was a parable for all time. Very obviously it could not give real relief to the conscience. There was no direct contact between the worshipper and God. All he could hope for was that his representative would not forget to put his case before the Eternal and Almighty Father, when they were face to face. From first to last, the service stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings and carnal ordinances. There was the shadow of

good things to come, not the very image of the things; and there was a remembrance of sins made year after year, with no consciousness of absolute remission and relief.

—**In Modern Life.** This, again, is the type of the religion of not a few. They have no spiritual vision, no spiritual touch. Their highest aim is to fulfil diligently and conscientiously their religious duties, as prescribed by their religious directors and counsellors. They are regular and punctual, scrupulous and minute. So far as the outward observance and the inner desire to perform all that is required by the Church and her ministers, they are without reproach; and yet they never feel satisfied. The veil is never withdrawn. Always touching the garment's hem, they never get a glimpse of the face of the Wearer. Without a doubt these obtain the virtue of the Risen Life of Christ. But they have no assurance, no consciousness of child-ship, no witness of the Spirit. As it was in the days of Shiloh's sanctuary, when Samuel ministered there, so for them: "The Word of the Lord was precious (or rare) in those days; there was no open vision." There is something better for thee. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a great Priest over the house of God; *let us draw near . . .*" (Heb. x. 19-21, R.V.).

The Jerusalem Stage. God next recorded His Name in *Jerusalem*. For the full story of the overthrow of Shiloh and its causes, and of the transference of the seat of worship to Jerusalem, we must turn to Psalm lxxviii. 57-72 and 1 Kings vi., etc. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth was Mount Sion, the city of the Great King; but the special attraction which drew the crowds of devout men from every nation under heaven was the fact that God had said: "This is My rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Jerusalem was the city of the Great King, mainly because the Temple arose above all other buildings like a dream of white marble. Try and imagine the fascination of those great annual gatherings. The cornfields were bare, the vines had yielded their ruddy juice, and all the land was resting from the labours of the year. The villages yielded the beginnings of the pilgrim-host, which were swollen by confluent streams as every village and mountain-valley yielded their tributaries; and presently fathers, mothers, and children, grey-headed sires and aged women, with boys and girls of the third and fourth generations, that made hill and valley ring with laughter and

song, crowded through the gates of the beloved city. The fathers told again to their children the great stories of the past, that they might pass them on to their children. They thronged the Temple-courts, participated in the holy rites, thrilled before the sacred words that were read or sung, and gave themselves up to all the holy associations that religion and patriotism could inspire. And even when darkness fell, and the clouds of Sennacherib's attack gather around the beleaguered city, Isaiah and others said, "There is no need of fear. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved, God shall help her, when the morning breaks."

—**In Modern Life.** This is a phase of religious experience of which we all know something. The great festal crowds, the vast convocations, the uplifting volume of praise and prayer, the thrill of the mighty audience reacting upon each unit, the stirring sermon—all this is helpful, especially in the early stages of our religious life; and though, thank God, it is possible for any one of us to worship Him in the privacy of our own apartment, yet we all know something of the telepathy of common worship, and of the influence that passes from heart to heart in the emotion of a great audience. We should prize such opportunities. Probably we never realise how much we owe to them, until in long weeks of sickness, or in the comparative isolation of protracted journeyings, we are deprived of their impulse and consolation.

A Difficulty. There is always a difficulty, however, in deciding how much of the helpfulness of these services is due to the emotions, and how much to the felt presence of God. Our nature is so mysterious and intricate in its mechanism that we are not always aware as to the true origin and therefore true worth of what we take to be religion. It may only be an emotional fervour, and if so, it will lose its intensity, and have no vital effect on our inner life. It was to the people of Jerusalem that the prophet addressed, in God's Name, the words: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—I cannot away with iniquity AND the solemn meeting" (Isa. i. 13, R.V.). Notice that *and*. It is very emphatic. The solemn meeting is not sufficient to deliver the soul from its iniquity, because its effect may only be skin-deep.

The Stage of the Well or Spring. There was a fourth phase of which our Lord spoke, when He sat at noon beside the well, and which we may describe as *the Worship of the Well or Spring*. Let

us recall those memorable words (John iv. 21-26, R.V.): "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth." Then almost pathetically He adds, as though God were turning away dissatisfied from all the vain worship of the Temple, "For such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers."

Our True Temple. The true temple is the spirit of man. Not there, but here: not without, but within: not far away, but in thy mouth and in thy heart. Thou mayest find, as Plato said, that though thou dwellest within the walls of a city, thou mayest be as in a shepherd's fold on a mountain. The same thought occurs frequently in the writings of Marcus Aurelius. Men seek for themselves private retiring-places, as country villages, the seashore, mountains; and no thoughtful person would throw a slight on the acquisition of such opportunities when possible. Our Lord loved and chose to frequent mountains, gardens, and the sea. Divine pleasures are found in solitude. With more power over our own spirits, we may return thence to the business of the world. But where this is not possible we may still worship God in the very beauty of holiness. At any time whatsoever, it is in our power to retire within ourselves and be at rest.

"Heart, heart, awake! the love that loveth all
Maketh a deeper calm than Horeb's cave,
God in thee, can His children's folly gail?
Love may be hurt, but shall not love be brave?
Thy holy silence sinks in dews of balm;
Thou art my solitude, my mountain calm.
Brood Thou around me, and the noise is o'er;
Thy universe my closet with shut door,
The heart."

The Ordinances and Ourselves. The *altar of earth* is our humility that casts itself down in profound penitence and heart-break. Our *burnt-offering* is the consecration and devotement of spirit, soul, and body. "A body Thou hast prepared for me: behold I come to do Thy will, O God." Our *peace-offering* is our deep fellowship with God, as we commune with Him on the glory and beauty of the Only-Begotten Son. The *place* where He records His Name, and whither He comes to bless us, is within; and where the Shekinah

shines in any heart, however humble, the commonest texture becomes transfigured, even as our Lord's simple homespun did, of which it is said, that His raiment became white and dazzling. We need to lift no tool to sculpture aught; no gods of gold or silver are required; the prohibition not to make any likeness of God is not for us, for have we not beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? No need to say, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," when we have seen Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His Person.

Our Praise. And when we worship thus, praise is our chief employ. We are not wholly indifferent to the command to make known our requests, but they are more frequently requests for other people than for ourselves, or, if we ask for ourselves, we include all with whom we live. We confess our sins, but we adore the Love that forgives and redeems. Whether in the aisle of pine-trees, or in the tiny garden, or by the margin of lake or river, we walk to and fro, saying aloud, "We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord." And suddenly we find ourselves part of the Holy Church throughout the world, irrespective of boundaries and divisions, as she joins her voice with the cry of the glorified hosts of perfected spirits before the throne. Then suddenly the glory of God shines over the humble plains of our daily life, and we hear a great multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, Peace on earth, Goodwill toward men."

II

THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

EXODUS xxi. 1-32

1. Now these *are* the judgments which thou shalt set before them.
2. If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.
3. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him.
4. If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.
5. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children: I will not go out free:
6. Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.
7. And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do.
8. If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her.
9. And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters.
10. If he take him another *wife*; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.
11. And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money.
12. He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.
13. And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver *him* into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.
14. But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.
15. And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.
16. And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.
17. And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.
18. And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with *his* fist, and he die not, but keepeth *his* bed:
19. If he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote *him* be quit: only he shall pay *for* the loss of his time, and shall cause *him* to be thoroughly healed.

20. And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished.

21. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money.

22. If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart *from her*, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges *determine*.

23. And if *any* mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life,

24. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,

25. Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

26. And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake.

27. And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake.

28. If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox *shall be* quit.

29. But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death.

30. If there be laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him.

31. Whether he have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him.

32. If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

II

THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

EXODUS xxi. 1-32

The Law of the Covenant. "The Book of the Covenant," which extends to xxiii. 19, was a peculiarly sacred document. It contained the conditions on which the peculiar relationship between Israel and Jehovah was based. If they obeyed His voice indeed, and kept His covenant, they would become His peculiar treasure among all people, "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (xix. 6).

It is quite likely, as I have already suggested, that many of the laws and judgments in these sections are a codification of existing customs, which had sprung up in the previous centuries, and may have dated from the days when, with his women-folk perched high on the backs of camels and a great retinue of household servants, Abram took his journey across the unoccupied territories between Ur of the Chaldees and Damascus.

Moses and Hammurabi. Strong confirmation to this suggestion is afforded by comparing these enactments with the Code of Hammurabi, probably the Amraphel of Gen. xiv. 1, one of the most important personages in the history of Western Asia.¹ He lived about 1900 B.C.; and in A.D. 1902 his monument—"a block of black diorite, nearly eight feet high"—was discovered. The inscription on this precious stone contained a collection of the laws of his empire. There are many interesting points of agreement between the two codes; but there is nothing to prove that the great Hebrew Legislation was copied or borrowed from Hammurabi's, but rather that they emanated from some common source, which was probably the traditional law and custom prevailing throughout the ancient East at a very distant period. Wherever possible, as here, God takes up and endorses those conclusions to which the Spirit of Truth has led mankind.

¹ *The Century Bible*, p. 13.

The Conditions Reflected in the Laws: Civilisation. As we pass we must notice the simplicity of *the state of civilisation* which these laws reflect. The ox and ass figure largely in the enumeration of property, the one for the toils of agriculture, the other for burden-bearing. There are no fences on the broad pasture-lands and commons on which the cattle graze, hence the peril of persons being gored (28, etc.).

Justice. *The administration of Justice was equally simple.* There were no gaols, and the act of requital for wrongdoing had to be automatic and summary. Ordinarily, the rule was one of strict retaliation: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (24, 25; Lev. xxiv. 20; Deut. xix. 21). This principle lay at the basis of Solon's administration of Athens, and of the Twelve Tables of early Roman law; and there was a *primâ facie* appearance of justice in it which captivated simple people; but in practice it is uneven in its operation; and it would be obviously unwise for the sake of early society, where man was constantly engaged in fighting for his own, to increase the numbers of mutilated bodies, therefore the principle of preliminary compensation crept in and was legalised (19, 22, 30, 32). But a clear distinction was drawn between the sudden act of passion—"stone or fist," and the premeditated act of revenge—"lying in wait" (14, 18).

The Office of the Gôel. In the early stages of human society the avenging of crime and wrong is the allotted work of the gôel. To avenge the death of a kinsman was more than a right—it was a religious duty; and so strongly was this idea entertained that, long after the State had interfered, and made murder a matter of public prosecution, the nearest kinsman was imperatively bound to set the State procedure in motion. There is a trace of this in verse 13, which doubtless referred, in the first instance, to a part of the camp, known as the Sanctuary, where a manslayer might find respite until it was determined whether he was guilty of homicide or murder. This arrangement became afterwards extended into the appointment of six refuge-cities. But side by side with this ancient institution, judges were evidently assuming responsibility on the part, and in the name, of society (22).

The Honour of Womanhood. A new conception of *the honour of womanhood* also begins to appear. The national conscience is instructed, not on the respect due to a princess or priestess, such as Deborah or Miriam, but to a humble and unknown female slave,

i.e. of a poor girl sold by her parents into slavery. She would be placed in a position—which is of course in this Christian age unthinkable—of a kind of secondary wife. Our Lord says that this custom was permitted by the Mosaic Code, because of the hardness of the uninstructed heart (Matt. xix. 8); but He swept away these concessions, by the one authoritative sentence which reinstituted the primal law of marriage,—“Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female?” i.e. the one man for the one woman, and the one woman for the one man, the only admissible exception being the commission of the one act which dissolves faith. God’s way is not catastrophic, but by the gradual method of education and evolution, as the eye is prepared by the gradual dawn of daylight to endure the full glare of noon. But the Mosaic legislation, as set down here, was as immensely in advance of anything known in the world of that time as it was beneath the Christian standard. It had, however, the certain promise of woman’s complete emancipation, because for the first time it conferred rights on the poor girlslave (7–11).

Slavery. The legislation before us deals largely with the question of *slavery*, which was an integral part of the social economy of that age. It would have been useless to prohibit it, until conscience had become educated to a certain level. In the first approach to complete emancipation, all that was possible was to regulate the conditions of slavery, and insert in the national code principles which would ultimately render it impossible for slavery to continue. We cannot forget that, not so very long ago, many members of the Christian Church justified slavery as the best condition for child-races, and that men in high standing as Christians held slaves. The Scriptures, however, have made the system impossible, not only because of the evils which are almost inevitable, but because of its fundamental doctrine, that all men were created by one God, redeemed by one precious blood, and intended to form one great family.

The Message to Ourselves. As we study these ancient laws, it becomes us to ask ourselves whether this Mosaic Code contained in the Book of the Covenant may not have a message for ourselves, in regard to our relations to our fellows, and especially to God.

Consideration for Servants. *Our relations to servants and others* must always be considered in the light of our attitude towards God. The *maidservant*—not now, thank God, a slave—but able to leave the household if she will, should always be kindly considered. She

too is the centre of a little world, far away in some Lowland village or Highland glen, and the post bring no news that fills her soul with joy or sorrow, but which she must probably keep to herself. She has her life to live which is as much to her as yours and mine. Without undue interference, the mistress is somewhat responsible to some distant mother for the company she keeps and the way she spends her leisure. Do not forget that she sometimes needs a little colour in the drab of the kitchen-life. Put her in touch with a Bible-class or church, if possible. For her sake, if for no other, maintain the family-altar. At your hands, the soul may be required, though you have only such rights in these matters as love and courtesy concede. But if you ignore her and such as she is, take care lest the temptations that master sons, and break mother's hearts, do not come back to you from her or her class.

Teach your children, and especially your sons, to honour the domestic servant, who is always at their beck and call. Not to give needless trouble, not to be unreasonable in our demands, not to be fretful, rude, passionate, and exacting, such are among the courtesies of a Christian home, and it is an invariable rule that those families are best served where the most courtesy and consideration are given to the servants. But be it remembered that it is no kindness to allow slackness, or permit rightful and necessary duties to be neglected. God Himself in His discipline of His children tempers goodness and exactitude. He comes to reckon with His servants, and does not shrink from inflicting heavy punishment on the unfaithful.

Charity in Thought and Speech. The prescriptions against sins of violence remind us that there are other ways of smiting men than with fist or stone. We remember the Psalmist's description of the assaults of his enemies: "Their words are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." If you cannot speak kindly of people, it is better to refrain from speaking of them. Look out for the good and favourable points in the characters of those around you; and always remember that your alertness in discerning faults arises from your own liability of committing the same. In condemning them you betray yourself. It may be necessary to warn people against them; but always tell God first what you are going to do, and ask Him to show exactly the time and place. Never do it casually, or be betrayed into it. Whenever you go into society, or are thrown with your confidential friend, offer the prayer: "Set a watch, O God, over my mouth, guard the door of my lips."

Sins of the Tongue. And if there has been undue licence in speech, to the detriment of any absent one, there should always be compensation, in the confession of the wrong done, or where that is not possible, in the reparation for the wrong by an additional meed of praise. Be exacting and rigorous with yourself in these matters. "Pay for the loss of his time, character, or prestige, and cause him to be thoroughly healed!"

—**Their Punishment.** There is a profound truth contained in the ancient *Lex Talionis*, "An eye for an eye," etc. Every thought to which we give expression affects not only the person against whom we speak, but ourselves. Indeed, if a person stands fast in truth and love, we cannot harm him; our darts fall blunted to the ground. He is hidden as in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. No weapon that is formed against him can prosper, and every tongue that rises in judgment against him is condemned. If only God's servants, when they are maligned, would keep still and refrain from going hither and thither to explain and vindicate themselves, they would find God bringing forth their righteousness as the light and their judgment as the noon-day. But cruel and unkind statements come back to the person from whom they have emanated like the Australian boomerang. "Curses," the proverb says, "come home to roost." Every evil, malicious, and untrue word leaves its poison in the soul from which it emanates, and we reap the result of our idle words, until our own soul is sick and faint and poisoned. How little do the backbiters and gossipmongers of drawing-room or kitchen realise this!

Parents and Children. Of the honour and reverence due to parents we need hardly speak. Obedience is the law of a happy childhood; but it gradually passes into fellowship which, in a sense, is equally commanding. Parents do wisely, when they assist the process. They lose nothing by becoming the close companions and loving advisers of their grown sons and daughters. There is hardly anything more lovely than the mutual confidences of mothers and sons, of fathers and daughters: but it is a mistake when the parent forgets that children of twenty-five or thirty require different handling from that which was perfectly wise and right in their early teens: yet mothers have been known to order their grown daughters about as if they were children. This brings irritation and misunderstanding into what might be a very happy relationship.

Love the Fulfilling of the Law. That we are liable for any hurt which may be indirectly caused by us is an axiom which hardly needs

to be emphasised; but as we turn from these injunctions, let us remember that Love is the fulfilling of the Law, and that in the Love of the Spirit we shall not only avoid these wrongs, but think on and practise whatsoever things are just, pure, lovable, and of good repute. We shall take care to practise not the negative, but the positive sides of the divine requirements. We shall realise that the Love of God begets a love for man which is infinitely sensitive.

The Case of the Bondman. We cannot turn from the remarkable paragraph with which this section opens, without recalling the use made of it in subsequent Scriptures. The seasons have been unkindly and the harvests have failed. The locust or mildew, the Nab or landlord have been too much for the small landowner. Vintage and olive-yield have been disappointing and disastrous. Bankruptcy can no longer be evaded. From the pressure of creditors, and the cries of hungry children, the farmer, distracted and hopeless, finally concludes to approach some rich neighbouring landowner, whose estate covers many far-extending acres. He obtains an interview, states his case, and asks for help. It is finally arranged that for the next six years he shall make over his land to be held by the great landlord, whilst his family and he become part of his household to be provided and cared for. Debts and creditors are referred for payment to his patron, and all legitimate requirements are met. The husband and father gladly gives his service to secure so great returns, always realising that in the seventh year he may go forth free. Even though at first the necessity to do another's behests might seem irksome, the consciousness of relief and security was prepondering and immense. The husband and father would look into the faces of his dear ones, filling out with happier conditions and regular nourishment, and be abundantly repaid. At the expiration of the six years, the small farmer might again seek an interview with the man who had befriended him, and explain his profound unwillingness to assume the anxieties and risks of his former life. He would propose that the arrangement which had worked out so happily should become a permanent one. On this, the magistrates would be called in, and whilst in their presence the petitioner repeated the prescribed formula, "I love my master, I will not go out free," his ear would be bored through with an awl to the doorpost of his master's house, making him his servant for ever.

The Psalmist's Application and Our Own. It is to this that the Psalmist refers in Psalm xl. 6, when he says: "Sacrifice and offering

Thou hast no delight in; mine ears hast Thou opened [marg. digged, or pierced for me]. . . . I delight to do Thy will, O my God,"—words the significance of which have a sublime exposition in Heb. x. 5-7. In our service of our Lord, these same words may be applied to us, as were so true of Him. We may serve Him under compulsion and constraint, because we see no other alternative, or we may serve Him with the devotion born of love. Oh for the latter! Oh to be constrained by the love of Christ! Oh to be able to say, deeply and gladly, "Bore my ear to Thy cross, dear Lord, and tie my wayward nature so closely to Thyself, that I may never be able to untie the knots. So I shall be for Thee, as Thou for the Father." And if you would know how the Lord Christ will treat you, His willing slave, read carefully the injunctions laid down for masters in Scripture, and remember that He will fulfil all those for you, and more also. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest Lev. xxv. 35-39; Col. iv. 1; and the Epistle to Philemon.

III

THE RIGHTS OF PROPERTY

EXODUS xxi. 33–xxii. 15

33. And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein;

34. The owner of the pit shall make *it* good, *and* give money unto the owner of them; and the dead *beast* shall be his.

35. And if one man's ox hurt another's, that he die; then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the money of it; and the dead *ox* also they shall divide.

36. Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own.

1. If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.

2. If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, *there shall* no blood *be shed* for him.

3. If the sun be risen upon him, *there shall be* blood *shed* for him; *for* he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.

4. If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double.

5. If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution.

6. If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed *therewith*; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

7. If a man shall deliver unto his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, let him pay double.

8. If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges, *to see* whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods.

9. For all manner of trespass, *whether it be* for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, *or* for any manner of lost thing, which *another* challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; *and* whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour.

10. If a man deliver unto his neighbour an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing *it*:

11. *Then* shall an oath of the Lord be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbour's goods; and the owner of it shall accept *thereof*, and he shall not make *it* good.

12. And if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof.

13. If it be torn in pieces, *then* let them bring it *for* witness, *and* he shall not make good that which was torn.

14. And if a man borrow *ought* of his neighbour, and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof *being* not with it, he shall surely make *it* good.

15. *But* if the owner thereof *be* with it, he shall not make *it* good: if it *be* an hired *thing*, it came for his hire.

III

THE RIGHTS OF PROPERTY

EXODUS xxi. 33–xxii. 15

The Code and Christian Morals Compared. We are apt to take our rectitude and goodness as a matter of course, and it will be good to linger for a little over these paragraphs, with the view of inquiring if our Christian morality is as quick and sensitive as that of this ancient code.

—As to **Careless Neglect** (vers. 33–36). The *first* case is that of water-cisterns, such as are very frequent in countries like Palestine, and are usually covered by a flat stone or a number of planks. To obtain water, it is necessary to uncover them; and it would be a gross act of carelessness to leave them so, lest animals, accustomed to come to them for water, should, on some hot and thirsty day, try to help themselves to drink, and should fall through the aperture. Whether the pit were full, or empty, or in process of construction, this would kill them. Obviously any person guilty of such gross carelessness would be held liable for the loss incurred. And the Christian must be equally careful lest any should suffer from his neglect.

If through his neglect to turn off a water-tap or a gas-jet, the property of an hotel-keeper is damaged, he must certainly own up to his neglect, and make good the damage. If his motor-car destroys a lamb or a fowl, he will certainly stay to make compensation. The Christian owner of property will see to it that the drains of his humblest cottage are in good condition, lest any harm accrue to a tenant's child; and if, through want of such care, a child should be ill and die of typhoid, he will unhesitatingly bear all the cost that can be fairly traced to his neglect. The Christian traveller will take care to leave the railway-carriage, hotel chamber, and other similar public resort in as good a condition as he would expect and desire, were he to be following next after himself. He will leave no pits behind him for the entangling of his fellow-travellers, because

either he did not pay his accounts, or was discourteous and niggardly.

—As to **Possible Injury or Annoyance**. The *second* case is that of an ox that had been known to be of a vicious disposition. The owner was bound to keep him in, or pay for the damage caused to another's property: and the Christian neighbour will not keep dogs that worry their neighbours' sheep or frighten their children; and will not disturb the quiet peace of others by the incessant noise of a gramophone or the practice of some strident instrument of brass.

—As to the **Law of Theft** (xxii. 1-4). The general principle was that theft should be punished by a fine. There was moral fitness in this, since a man paid for his raid on his neighbour's property by the loss of his own. Ordinarily, he was to restore to the robbed man double what he had taken; but if his actions gave evidence of a malignant and deep-seated purpose, he would have to pay fourfold for a sheep and fivefold for an ox. If unable to pay, he might be sold as a slave to make good the loss he had caused. The burglar, who attempted a house by night, might be killed in self-defence, but not if his attempt were made by day.

We should repudiate the charge of theft in this literal sense. But have we never stolen a fragment of our neighbour's good name, reputation, and standing? Have we never diverted to ourselves some of the love, respect, and credit that were due to him? Have we never laid claim to his ideas, thoughts, speeches, sermons, which we have passed off, *literatim et verbatim* as our own? If so, let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his own hands or brain the thing that is good.

—As to the **Law of Trespass** (vers. 5, 6). Next to theft, wanton damage of another's property is very reprehensible. The Israelite might turn his cattle into his neighbour's fields; or, either wantonly or accidentally, kindle a conflagration that would consume his corn, whether standing waiting for the sickle or already bound in shocks. Of course he must make the loss good. If we are animated by the Love of God, we shall take as much care of our neighbour's interests as of our own. We shall consider whether we cannot build our house so as not unnecessarily to spoil his view. We shall not allow our love of game to hurt his poultry-yards or crops; we shall abstain from all intrusive and obnoxious acts. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour." Christian men should look not only on their own things, but also on the things of others.

Above all, we must remember that the tongue is a fire, set on fire by Gehenna, and capable of setting on fire a whole neighbourhood. Ah, how much damage professedly Christian people have done by starting a fire "in the thorns!" Have we done so? Then let us spend the rest of our life in making amends, by disabusing the minds of those whom we have poisoned, and by humble apologies to the individual we have maligned.

—As to the **Law of Deposits** (vers. 7-13). We are reminded of the sacred character of trusts, whether they consist of a secret entrusted on the pledge of inviolable confidence; or of a trusteeship of property made by a dying man to his choice friends for administration to widow or orphans and others; or of a wardship of young and immature children; or of manuscripts that need to be edited and published; or of funds given for investment. Few are there that have not come under one or other of these divisions! And it is well to observe the provisions here implied, and which may be summarised thus:

(a) In the case of loss which is not chargeable on the neglect of the trustee, the trustee is not liable.

(b) But if he take insufficient care, and damage ensues, he is bound to make good the injury caused by his neglect.

(c) If he should embezzle his trust, single restitution must be followed by condign punishment.

(d) In doubtful cases, the solemn assurance of the trustee that he had appropriated nothing should be accepted. The cause should come "before God," which may refer to the Court of Justice, where the trustee would be put on his oath.

Our Responsibility. As we entrust our souls to God, and expect Him to help that which we commit to Him, so we should accept no trust, whether of a secret, a child, a sum of money, or an office, without due deliberation. But when once undertaken, we should leave no *i* undotted and no *t* uncrossed, in our determined effort to fulfil the trust and confidence reposed in us.

This should especially be the case in the acceptance of public positions. Too many are absolutely reckless of the responsibility involved in giving their names to societies and institutions, or in assuming the honour associated with public functions, without fulfilling the duties that are involved. If you cannot honestly fulfil some public office, refuse to be pressed into it. If you cannot keep

in touch with a society, have your name removed from the list of vice-presidents. If you will not inspect the report and balance-sheet, you are not justified in posing as sponsor, and gaining popularity or notoriety under false pretences. You are false to the trust which the public, unable to investigate for themselves, repose in you.

—**As to Borrowing** (vers. 14, 15). Not all of us are careful as to the duty of restoring borrowed articles with as little delay as possible, and in as good a condition as that in which we received them. How many books are there in your library that have been there an unconscionable time, so much that probably the owner has forgotten that they are in your possession! How many umbrellas, waterproofs, rugs, and other articles are being worn out by the borrowers until they are not worth returning! How much money we have borrowed for small expenses, which we have failed to repay! We forget that there is a text in the Psalms which says that it is "*the wicked*" who borroweth and payeth not again. We might object to applying that epithet to our borrowing friends, or having it applied to ourselves; but certainly the habit is wanting in the highest sanctions; and it would be very wholesome for us all if we would go through our household wares, discover all the books and other goods which are not ours, and return them to our friends with humble apologies. If we arrive at the altar, says our Lord, and remember that our brother has aught against us, we must leave our duty to God, in order first to address ourselves to performing our obligations to man.

The Importance of Detail. The things enumerated in this chapter may seem too small to mention; but after all nothing is small that touches character. The Master said that no jot or tittle should pass from the Law till all was fulfilled, and the fulfilment was to emanate from love and loyalty to Himself. Are we aware of the exactitude and minuteness of the demands of the Holy Spirit, His Spirit, the Spirit of Love? His word divides between joints and marrow. He notices cups of cold water, one idle word, one wayward look. The rocking-stones of great decisions impinge on very small points of rest. A whisper may start an avalanche. An aperture the size of a child's hand may wreck a dyke. We are not saved by attention to these minutiae, but if we are saved we shall not only be careful of the weightier matter of the law, but of straining out the gnats from the wine.

IV

MISCELLANEOUS LAWS

EXODUS xxii. 16-xxiii. 19

16. And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife.

17. If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.

18. Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

19. Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death.

20. He that sacrificeth unto *any* god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

21. Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

22. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.

23. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry;

24. And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

25. If thou lend money to *any of* my people *that is* poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.

26. If thou at all take thy neighbours' raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down:

27. For that *is* his covering only, it *is* his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I *am* gracious.

28. Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.

29. Thou shalt not delay *to offer* the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.

30. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, *and* with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me.

31. And ye shall be holy men unto me: neither shall ye eat *any* flesh *that is* torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.

1. Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

2. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to *do* evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest *judgment*:

3. Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.

4. If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

5. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

6. Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause.

7. Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

8. And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

9. Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

10. And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof:

11. But the seventh *year* thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, *and* with thy oliveyard.

12. Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.

13. And in all *things* that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

14. Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year.

15. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)

16. And the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, *which is* in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.

17. Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God.

18. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning.

19. The first of the first-fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seeth a kid in his mother's milk.

IV

MISCELLANEOUS LAWS

EXODUS xxii. 16-xxiii. 19

It has been observed¹ that in this remaining section of the Book of the Covenant there is a want of method and logical sequence which makes it extremely difficult to arrange its precepts in a manner which would commend itself to the modern mind.

The Care of the Wards of Jehovah. We are, first, attracted by those who may be fairly described as *the wards or clients of Jehovah*.

—**The Wronged Maid.** Foremost among these is *the young girl* who has been cruelly wronged (vers. 16, 17). At any rate she shall be secure of an honourable marriage, either by her seducer, or by the payment of a worthy dowry, enabling her to contract a worthy match, notwithstanding the indignity she has suffered. The religious person, man or woman, is encouraged, therefore, to espouse the cause of girls like this, who in every age of the world have been induced to fling away the choice jewel of their purity.

The Stranger. Next in order is *the stranger* (ver. 21). The Hebrews were prone to forget that terrible Egyptian experience, when their fathers were strangers in the land of Egypt; and the stranger in their midst was in danger of being imposed upon, as elsewhere and always. Without friends, imperfectly acquainted with the customs and language of the people among whom he is stranded, compelled to trust himself to those who lie in wait for the unsophisticated and simple, the stranger is much to be pitied, and how often he has been accounted an easy and valuable prey! That he is so often referred to in the Pentateuch is not only a distinctive characteristic of its mild and noble spirit, but gives an incentive to ourselves. The alien who had been attracted to shelter, as Ruth did, beneath the wing of the God of Israel, was to share the Sabbath rest (xx. 10), might bring his offerings to the Tabernacle door (Lev. xvii. 8, 9), and was

¹ See *Pulpit Commentary on Exodus*, which has supplied several valuable suggestions for this chapter.

even assured of the love of God (Deut. x. 18, 19). So far, therefore, from vexing, the Israelites were bidden to love them.

—**Our Duty.** Ah! what blessing might accrue to the whole world if the Christian churches, through their members and adherents in the great centres of Christian civilisation, on either side of the Atlantic, could give a worthier welcome to the students that pour into them from all parts of the world to study in their universities, hospitals, and law courts! Instead of leaving our shores, for Burmah, India, China, or Japan, with a knowledge of our science, but contempt for our religion, how much might be done to attach them not only to ourselves but to the religion of Jesus Christ!

The Widow and the Fatherless. Next come *the Widow and the Fatherless* (vers. 22–24). The presence of this injunction on the statute-book furnishes melancholy evidence that these helpless ones, whose pitiful care is surely sad enough to melt hearts of stone, were not exempt from heartless cruelty and oppression. It is a very beautiful testimony, however, to the unique character of this legislation, that it so frequently emphasises Jehovah's solicitude for such. Throughout the Scriptures, the same spirit reveals itself. The widow and fatherless ate the tithe of the yearly produce (Deut. xiv. 29), and received their share in the rejoicings of the great feasts (xvi. 11–14). The widow's raiment might not be taken in pledge (xxiv. 17); and the gleanings of the harvest and the vintage were viewed as her perquisite (xxiv. 19–21). God sent Elijah to a widow-woman, beyond the precincts of Israel, that she should share in the provision prepared for His servant; and declared Himself to be the Father of the fatherless and Judge of the widow. The Saviour was urged by the widow's tears at Nain to recover her son to life and pure religion and undefiled before God the Father was declared by James to have this as its distinguishing note, that the widow is visited in her affliction. This is as dear to God as the unspotted purity of the holy soul. It is hardly necessary to inculcate on the Christian Church her duty to the widow. From the earliest days her desolate lot has engaged special solicitude (1 Tim. v. 3–9, 16). And let any widow who may read these words take comfort from the assurance given here, that her cry will *surely* bring about Divine interposition on her behalf (ver. 23).

—**The Poor.** *The Poor* also are specially mentioned (vers. 25–27). The reason of God's care for them is distinctively stated—"For I am gracious." Can Jesus Christ forget that His mother, when she

presented Him in the Temple, could only bring two doves, because unable to afford more—this being in advance of the gifts of the Wise Men? The poor have only to cry, and He will hear. In the Israelite Commonwealth, not only were their richer brethren forbidden to make loans to them on interest, but they were expressly commanded to lend to them without (Deut. xv. 7-10). Those who had served as household slaves to extinguish their indebtedness, were to be dismissed full-handed (vers. 13, 14). The poor labourer's garment, needed to envelop him in its warm folds by night, was to be restored to him at the end of the day, on the morning of which he had pledged it for tools or food. He was not to have the misery of a sleepless night in addition to his other anxieties and privations. Do we sufficiently consider those homeless wanderers who may be spending the night in the streets whilst we are snug within our curtains? Not that it is good to give indiscriminate charity, or to make the way of the spendthrift and wrongdoer easy; but there are homeless ones who cannot be classed with these—especially women and children. Christians should inform themselves in Social Science and take part in movements for Social Reform. Radical and far-reaching schemes, dealing with modern conditions, are more urgently required than doles of charity. They cost more thought and take longer to evolve; but the result is more merciful and permanent. Poverty is due in its widest and largest aspects, not to wrongdoing, but to the preponderance of wealth in the hands of the few, instead of being evenly spread over the many. The goal of social reconstruction is that each human life should have a sufficiency of the great primal gifts of the Creator for its development and the realisation of its native possibilities.

—**Mercy to Dumb Animals.** But the kine, the sheep, and the goats, which had just given birth to their first-born, came equally under the thoughtful care of the great Lawgiver, who ordained that, for a week at least, the mother should have the pleasure and relief of suckling her offspring (xxii. 30). Thrice the Hebrews were forbidden to seethe a kid in its mother's milk (xxiii. 19; xxxiv. 26; and Deut. xiv. 21), probably to inculcate a tender appreciation of the natural order, and of the relation subsisting between the mother and her offspring. It was against nature to make the mother an accomplice in the death of her child. The precept is capable of wide application. Would that all mothers were equally careful for their children!

The Stringency of this Legislation. *The Stringency of this Legislation* is apparent in the enumeration of crimes which were visited by the death-sentence in vers. 18, 19, 20. It was also afterwards affixed to the sin named in ver. 28 (see Lev. xxiv. 16). Much discussion has been aroused by the sentence here passed on witches and witchcraft, which led to much cruelty in the Middle Ages, and immediately after the Reformation. Large numbers of innocent women were burned or hanged on the merest suspicion of the black arts, but certainly we have gone to the other extreme in the licence we give to crystal-gazers, to those who profess to read the future from the palm, or to summon spirits at their will. Beyond doubt, as the monuments prove, the Egyptians practised the use of the *planchette*; and every method was adopted by Moses to stamp out from the Hebrew race practices which invariably draw off the soul from the worship and service of God.

Our Duty. What have we to do with demons, we, who have first-hand rights to enter into the immediate presence of the Lord of all principality and power? When I accept the hospitality of a wealthy friend, who has troops of servants at his disposal, his welcome does not confer on me the right to command his servants. If I require their special assistance, it is a matter of honour and etiquette alike to request him to bid them help me. Whenever a soul becomes a member of the divine household, it has to deal not directly with the departed, the angels, or demons, but always with the Mediatorship of Christ. If *He* chooses to transmit a message to the beloved who have gone to be with Him, or to commission a ministering Angel to help us, it is for Him absolutely and only to take the initiative, and to do as He will among the armies of Heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. "*He is the Head of all Principality and Power.*"

The Administration of Justice. *The provisions for the administration of justice are very precise* (xxiii. 1-9). They affect the witnesses, the judges, and the accuser or plaintiff. *Witnesses* are warned against inventing an untrue tale, or circulating one (vers. 1, 2). *Judges* are warned against being affected by the voice of the multitude, as Pilate was. They are not to be moved by the outcry of the mob, or the venom of a partizan press. They are not to be biased by sentimentality on behalf of the poor, or partiality for the rich. They are specially charged to see to it that the innocent should not suffer, that the wicked should not escape, that foreigners should get justice; whilst a bribe was not to be entertained for a moment (vers. 2, 3,

6-9). *Accusers* also are specially exhorted not to slay the innocent by making a false charge; which, even though it were disproved, might blight the defendant's name, soil his character, and shorten his days (ver. 7).

What a tender interpolation is that of verses 4, 5, with respect to the ox or ass of an enemy! We can almost see the pious Israelite meeting the wandering ox of a man who had done his worst to injure him, and leading it back to the homestead, just in time to meet the owner coming in search; or finding his enemy tugging in vain to get his fallen ass on his feet, and hastening to lift it. Their joint-act could hardly fail to bring the two men together and soften asperities. It was not Moses who said that the Hebrews were to hate their enemies. It was an unwarrantable conclusion which the rabbis founded upon his legislation. Here and in other places the glory of the coming dispensation had begun to shine on the jewels of the ancient breastplate of judgment.

The Feasts to be Observed. The Code closes with a *specification of the Religious Festivals which were to be observed by the people*. When they had attained to the goal of their long pilgrimage, and were settled in the good land beyond the Jordan, they were enjoined to allow the land to rest on each seventh year. In Egypt, where the soil was continually replenished by the overflow of the mighty Nile, the land could yield crop after crop without exhaustion; but in Canaan, where there was no such natural provision, and where the science of the rotation of crops and of artificial manuring was unknown, the land must have become prematurely exhausted, save for some such provision as this. Only by lying fallow through the septennial year could it retain its fertility as a land of corn and wine, of vineyards and oil-olive. The farmer learnt the necessity of care and forethought; the poor, who are specially mentioned, were allowed to help themselves to what grew of itself, as to the wild produce of woods and hedgerows; whilst the people generally had opportunity for thought and prayer, for religious exercises, and for domestic and social pleasure. It is not improbable also that in this year the festivals at the Tabernacle were prolonged for the solemn reading of the Law in the ears of all the people, as was the case in the days of Nehemiah (Deut. xxxi. 10, 11; Neh. viii. 1-15). From the reference in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21 it would appear that this holy and wise arrangement had not been acted on; but for us how great a lesson is taught by the suggestion of this provision, followed as it is by that of the

Sabbath-rest! The question is whether the irreligion of our time may not be directly traceable to the unbroken drive and rush in which the modern world is living. We were not meant to work incessantly either at business or pleasure-taking. Long quiet days are necessary for the bliss of the family, the cultivation of the religious life, and for the growth of the soul in wisdom and strength. Otherwise we cannot be holy men unto God (xxii. 31).

Thrice each year the males were required to appear before God, and none was to appear before Him empty. All ancient religions had their festivals; and it is well that the children of God should maintain great convocations and conventions, when they feel the pulse of a great multitude engaged in praise, and prayer, and consecration. Heaven itself owes much of its delight to the great multitude, which no man can number, and to the vast orchestra of ten thousand times ten thousand voices. *The Feast of Unleavened Bread* fell in the early spring and commemorated the Exodus. *The Feast of Harvest* (or weeks) followed fifty days afterwards and commemorated the Giving of the Law; it was a peculiarly joyful occasion (Deut. xvi. 9-11), and for us is associated with the marvels of Acts ii. *The Feast of Ingathering* (or Tabernacles) began in the early part of October, when the olives had been gathered and the vintage was completed. The demand for this thrice-repeated visit to a common meeting-place was not tiresome, because Palestine was not bigger than Wales; and there was no better way of maintaining the Unity of the Nation in an age when there were no posts, telegraphs, telephones or daily Press.

Covenant and Character. As we conclude this brief review of the legislative contents of the Book of the Covenant, all the precepts of which the people definitely promised to fulfil, we can see from the crimes which were forbidden how much of heathen idolatry and custom still clung to the chosen race, which it would take long centuries of fiery ordeal to extirpate. But in this legislation we find the beginnings of their greatness; the genesis of that wonderful development which enabled them to furnish mankind with their sacred lyrics and epics, their unexcelled theology and ethics, their Psalmists, Prophets, Apostles and Teachers, and of whom, according to the flesh, came Jesus the Christ.

We cannot do better than close these chapters by the most eloquent passage in Lord Redesdale's Introduction to Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*—"The ancient Jew was not

a soldier—foreigners furnished the bodyguard of his king. He was no sailor like his cousins the Phoenicians, indeed he had a horror of the sea. He was no artist—he had to import craftsmen to build his Temple—neither was he a farmer nor merchant. What was it, then, that gave him his wonderful self-confidence, his toughness of character, which could overcome every difficulty, and triumph over other races? It was his belief in the sacred books of the law, the Thora; his faith in the promises of Jehovah; his certainty of belonging to the chosen people of God. The influence of the books of the Old Testament has been far-reaching indeed, but nowhere has it exercised more power than in the stablishing of the character of the Jew. If it means so much to the Christian, what must it not mean to him? It is his religion, the history of his race, and his individual pedigree, all in one. Nay! it is more than all that: it is the attesting document of his covenant with his God."

THE PREPARED PLACE AND THE ANGEL-GUIDE

EXODUS xxiii. 20-33

20. Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

21. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name *is* in him.

22. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.

23. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.

24. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.

25. And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

26. There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.

27. I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.

28. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

29. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.

30. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee until thou be increased, and inherit the land.

31. And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.

32. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.

33. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

V

THE PREPARED PLACE AND THE ANGEL-GUIDE

EXODUS xxiii. 20-33

"BEHOLD, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared" (ver. 20).

The Prepared Place for the Hebrews. I. *The Prepared Place.* In the dawn of history we see the patriarchal family leaving the Euphrates Valley and making across the desert for the land of which God had spoken. "The Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. . . . So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken unto him. . . . And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land that thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Gen. xii. 1; xiii. 14, 15). This promise which Jehovah made with Abraham He now confirmed to Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying, "Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of thine inheritance."

—**And for us.** "Now these things happened unto them by way of example, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Cor. x. 11, R.V.). For the Hebrews the prepared place was "the good land beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon," of which Moses spoke so pathetically; the land flowing with milk because of its pastures, and with honey because of its flowers; "the glory of all lands," because of its fountains and springs, its mountains and vales, and its impregnable fastnesses. It gleamed before the eye of the pilgrim-host as the Highland valley to that of the far-travelled emigrant returning to see the place of his birth. It behoved them from afar to press on through vicissitudes and perils, undaunted and resolute.

For the young, the prepared place seems to be success, love, and home: when the results of strenuous toil begin to be assured, and the firm land appears. Thus in the story of Creation, when chaos began to give place to order and beauty, the smile of Paradise answered to the love of the one man for the one woman.

For the saint, it is, generally speaking, the place of which the Master said, "In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself."

In that Land We shall be Perfected. The attractiveness of the fair land of Heaven arises from three anticipations. (1) *We shall be perfected.* There is not one of us that is not weary of the constant fret of the inward conflict. If only we could realise our ideals, if only we were always what we are in our best moments, if only the will were never uncrowned, if only the throne of conscience were never upturned. Our consciousness of God's presence is so fitful and the springs of eternity so intermittent. But there the vision of our Lord will be unimpaired. We shall see Him, and be like Him. We shall be perfectly good, desiring and realising only the best. Our whole being will be responsive to the summons of His will, and never get jangled and out of harmony. We shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, because He will make us exceeding glad with His countenance.

—**And shall be in Accord with Our Surroundings.** (2) *We shall be in accord with the Nature of things.* Beauty is the remaining trace of the Creator's original workmanship. It is the hallmark of the Eternal. And when we are in perfect accord with Him, she drops her veil and makes us beside ourselves with ecstasy. Have you never walked to and fro, or sat quietly, amid some scene of natural beauty, like a summer morning on the hills, so intoxicated with the inner view of Nature that you hardly knew whether you were in the body or out? And have there not been other experiences, when the beauty of some natural law, or Divine handiwork, or moral splendour has broken freshly upon the eye of your mind, and you have been filled with speechless awe and reverence? These are rare and memorable experiences, and foreshadow the perfect unveiling of things as they are, when the mountains shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Creation is now subjected to vanity. She groaneth and travaileth in pain, but when she is

delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, when the sons of God are manifested, and the new heavens and earth are born, then God will destroy the face of the covering that is cast over all the peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations, and will swallow up death in victory.

—**And shall have Fellowship with the Blessed.** (3) *We shall have uninterrupted fellowship with the blessed.* Without us they cannot be made perfect, and are awaiting us. To sit at the feet of Paul, to talk with John, to hear the story of Creation or Redemption from the lips of one of the Elders, like him who questioned about the great multitude—"one of the elders answered, saying unto me"—to greet the holy dead, to resume the long-interrupted converse, to take up the broken and snapped threads of friendship and fellowship, without the possibility of misunderstandings, heartbreaks or severance—surely all this, in the sweet society of Paradise, is enough to quicken our footsteps. Some lonely people amongst us may even thank God for their lonely hours, for *they* will realise the joys of heavenly fellowship as none else can. To no feet are grass and moss so soft as to those which have climbed long and arduously the difficult flint-paved path.

The Possibilities of the Present. Such are some of the thoughts that cluster around the place that Christ has prepared for them that love Him. But how great a mistake it is to postpone these blessings till we have passed through the Doors of the West! Many, for instance, read those inspiring words of 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10 as if they referred only and solely to the other life; they somehow miss the explanatory clause which follows immediately. Let us read the passage again: "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit" (R.V.). The latter words prove that they have been revealed to some, as is certainly on record; but if to some, why not to all? Why should we not receive, *here* and *now*, the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things which are freely given to us by God? The one condition is that we should not be carnal, but spiritual, and that the eyes of our heart are enlightened that we may know. The trouble is, with most of us, that from the earliest infancy many loving friends have helped us to make use of the body, by which we know the world around us; and so few have

helped us to recognise and use the Spirit, by which we come to know the Unseen, the Infinite, and the Divine.

Why Wait Till Death? It is not needful to wait for death ere we enter on the enjoyment of the good things prepared for us before the foundations of the earth were laid. Our eternity does not begin from death, but from the soul's second birth. We begin to live the religious life, which means that we live, and move, and have our being in the Presence of God, and in constant touch with Him. Forgiveness, Salvation, the New Birth are all preliminary to this. They are the vestibule to the Palace. Suddenly the soul finds that God is all and in all, that it is a child in the Divine Love, who need go no more out, and it hears the assurance which is borne in perpetually on its inner consciousness, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is Thine."

Then those three experiences, which we have located in the other world, begin to be habitual possession of the soul. In union with Christ, it comes to itself, it obtains the child's open vision of Nature, and it knows that it has become one with the Holy Catholic Church, and is admitted to the communion of saints. "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours, and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23).

The Angel-Guide. II. *The Angel Convoy.* This Angel was no ordinary or created angel. He is repeatedly identified with Jehovah Himself. God's name—His essential nature—is in Him. The martyr Stephen, in his defence, speaking of Moses, said, "This is He that was in the assembly in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the Mount Sinai" (Acts vii. 38, R.V.). Now, we know Who that Angel was, and what He said. "When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, The place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exod. iii. 4, 5). Malachi describes Him as "the messenger of the Covenant" (Mal. iii. 1), whose way was to be prepared by John the Baptist. We can have no difficulty, therefore, in accepting the general consensus of Christian opinion, which has identified this Angel who was to help Israel in the way, and bring them to the prepared place, with Jesus Christ, the ever-blessed Son of God, to Whom is given the prerogative of pardoning or refusing to pardon sin.

—**For the Soul's Pilgrimage.** The Lord Jesus is the supreme Guide of the Soul's Pilgrimage. To abide in Him is to be saved from walking in darkness, and to have the light of life. He is the door and the way. As we yield ourselves to Him we are led into the deep things of God. But in order to appreciate Christ's guidance in "the Way"—the phrase by which Christianity was known in its earliest years (Acts ix. 2, R.V.)—we must be born of the Spirit, live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. The natural man lives only in the sensuous and intellectual realms. His outlook into the spiritual world is through a window of horn, or some similar almost opaque medium. The higher faculties, which the Apostle calls the eyes of the heart, must be opened before we know the hope of His calling, or the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, or the exceeding greatness of His power toward them that believe. We can only know what Christ waits to unfold, as fast as and to the degree in which we increase in spiritual perception; and our spiritual faculties can only mature, as our physical faculties did, through use, i.e. through obedience.

Submission to His Control. If any man is willing and resolved to do His will, he shall know, and shall follow on to know the Lord whose advent and work are prepared as the morning. Take heed then to the Christ above you, and more especially to the Christ within you. Hearken unto His voice speaking in the Horeb-Cave of your soul. Be not rebellious against Him, for if you will indeed hearken to His voice and do all that He speaks, then you will be brought into union with God and the nature of things. The stars in their courses will fight for you. The mountains shall bring peace, and the little hills righteousness. God will be an enemy to your enemies, and an adversary to your adversaries. For Christ Himself shall go before you, and bring you in to possess those parts of your own nature which have hitherto been held by the Amorite, the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Canaanite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. Those who obey Christ find Him to be as the Angel, whilst those who refuse Him discover Him to be as a hornet. God waits to bless, but if a man refuses and resists Him, He whets His sword.

Progress and Means. III. *The Royal Progress of the Soul.* The way to Canaan was infested by enemies, and the land itself was held by the nations already enumerated, but so long as Israel followed the Angel-Guide there was no power amongst them all that could resist them. The one condition was obedience—the hearkening to

His voice; and for us there is no other. Obey the voice that speaks in Scripture: obey the voice that speaks in moral intuitions: above all, obey the voice of the Good Shepherd, in the depths of the soul, of which Jesus said: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." As we obey Him, we climb the mountain, and as we climb we see the ever-extending panorama of truth, which is a far-reaching continent, only trodden by those who are willing to go in and possess it by the obedient following of Christ.

But notice the promises which will be fulfilled in our experience.

(1) *Guidance.* "Mine angel shall go before thee (ver. 23). It was superhuman guidance. He preceded them in the Pillar of Cloud and Flame, indicating the safest and directest of the desert-tracks, as no Arab or Bedäwin could; and wherever the cloud brooded the manna fell and the water flowed. The inner guidance of the Spirit of Jesus was of priceless value to Paul, as much in the paths He blocked as those He opened (Acts xvi. 6, 7, 10). And it is promised to every soul that will lay aside its own plans, and be still.

(2) *Material Blessing* (vers. 25, 26). There would be bread and water, immunity from disease, fertility of cattle, and the fulfilment of the term of life. It is not necessary to spiritualise all these, though they have their spiritual counterparts. But godliness has the promise of this life as well as of the next. It is a great word which is spoken of Abraham, when we are told that "Abraham died in a good old age, an old man, and *full*." Surely this is what under normal conditions a child of God, who has followed the laws of Christ, may attain to—a full life, overflowing with grace and truth, strength and sweetness, and perfectly satisfied.

(3) *The Conquest of Canaan* (vers. 27, etc.). This was to be a gradual process, "little by little," but it would be sure. If the Israelites had been asked which they preferred, they would doubtless have replied, let it be done "at once." But that policy would have led to the incursion of wild animals and the deterioration of the cultivated soil, and it was better in every way for the Divine purpose to be executed with Divine deliberation. This made the conquest more thorough and lasting. It also enabled the Israelites to consolidate and organise their conquests, as they went from one point to another. "Little by little" does the work of God proceed through the individual soul. "Little by little" do the conquests of the Cross win over the world. "Little by little" is the unfolding purpose of Redemption made manifest to men and

angels. Supposing it were otherwise, and that as the result of some extraordinary outpouring of God's Spirit whole nations and continents should suddenly turn to Him, how impossible it would be for the Church to overtake, supervise, instruct, and consolidate. There would be profound peril of error creeping in, and of the wrong leaders coming to the front. It is not good for the whole responsibility of a Kingdom to be cast on a child, it is better for him to grow into it little by little. And the constant necessity for watchfulness, for discipline, and for the practice of the warrior's outfit, is a great asset. The fact that all our enemies are not suddenly extirpated forbids the sleep of the enchanted ground and the enervation of the heated plain. It is good even to have an incentive, and to be compelled to own "that we are not already perfect, but we follow on."

Needed Warnings. It should be noticed that the injunctions against idolatry are constantly repeated. We find them in verse 24 and again in verses 32 and 33. The stringency of these reiterated commands apparently could not be too strongly emphasised, because of the filthy rites with which the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, of Chemosh and Rimmon, and of Canaanite deities was celebrated. It would be shameful even to mention the things that were done in their temples; and the emblems which the Israelites were commanded to destroy were highly indecent. Alas, that they disobeyed these commands, and that the story of the chosen people is one long series of provocations to the Angel of the Covenant. Thus the full limits of God's promise, mentioned here, were not realised until the reign of Solomon, and even then for but a little while, and it remains for yet another King to reign from the River to the end of the World. But let us take the warning seriously to heart, lest by our disobedience and failure we also limit the Holy One of Israel, and curtail the measure of influence, usefulness, and efficiency, which otherwise might be ours.

VI

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF APPROACH

EXODUS xxiv. 1-18

1. And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.

2. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord; but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him.

3. And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.

4. And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

5. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord.

6. And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

7. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.

8. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.

9. Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel;

10. And they saw the God of Israel; and *there was* under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in *his* clearness.

11. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

12. And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into 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.

13. And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua; and Moses went up into the mount of God.

14. And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you; and behold, Aaron and Hur *are* with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.

15. And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.

16. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

17. And 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.

18. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

VI

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF APPROACH

EXODUS xxiv. 1-18

A Wondrous History. This is an amazing chapter with its four concentric circles of approach to the Most High; and, however true as an historical narrative, it is still more illuminating and inspiring when considered as conveying admonition and encouragement for ourselves.

It appears that Moses descended from the Mount bearing in his mind the first draft of the Book of the Covenant. With a summary of this he made the people acquainted, and on the following morning he ratified the covenant by special rites before he ascended with the elders, in harmony with the Divine Invitation, to one of the lower spurs of the mountain. He then again descended with them to the plain, where he received a further summons to ascend the mountain in company with Joshua, who was comparatively a young man at that time, though giving remarkable evidence of his sincere piety and devotion (xxxiii. 11).

The First Circle. I. *The Outer Circle formed by the Masses of the People.* They were still kept without the barriers. It is expressly said, "they shall not come near." Though they were included in the Divine purpose, they had a very unintelligent appreciation of its real significance or importance. Had they really understood either the one or other, surely the shameful scene of the worship of the golden calf would never have been enacted. When Moses first recited the conditions of the Covenant, they answered with one voice: "All the words which the Lord hath spoken will we do." But probably they were more attracted by the general suggestion of occupying the promised land than aware of the binding nature of the conditions on which the occupation was to be based.

The Blood Rite. It would appear that Moses committed the laws to writing that very night, and rose very early in the morning to ratify them with the most solemn ceremonial. From time immemorial

men have bound themselves to each other by exchanging blood. There is no tie amid the Bedāwin more inviolable than this, and on this basis, though not exactly in the usual method, Moses sought to bind the people and Jehovah. An altar was built, twelve pillars were erected as a permanent memorial and young men selected from the firstborn sons of leading families, who officiated as priests until the family of Levi was set apart for that high office, offered burnt-offerings and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord. It must have been a solemn scene, witnessed by a great concourse of people, who may even have climbed the mountain-slopes, other than those of Sinai, to witness it. Moses' actions were specially observed as he collected the blood in basins, sprinkling half of it on the altar, and reserving the remainder till he had read once more the enumeration of the law from the book, probably of papyrus leaves, like those which have been recently discovered in Egypt, and on the pages of which he had written the law. When, a second time, the people had cried, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient," he took the blood which he had reserved, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded to you-ward" (Heb. ix. 20, R.V.).

A Sacramental Union. By thus sprinkling both the altar, as representing God, and the people, who were the parties to the covenant on the other side, Moses made both parties partakers of the same blood, and so secured a kind of sacramental union. Yet within a few weeks it was trodden under foot in shameful orgies and dances, showing that however stoutly men asseverate their determination to keep their vows of consecration, even going so far as to write and sign them with their own blood, nothing will avail to keep them stedfast, short of the promise of the new covenant, in which God says: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, I will put my laws on their heart, and upon their mind also will I write them, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 16, 17, R.V.).

Promise but not Service. Too many professing Christians resemble these people. They are willing enough to receive all the benefits of religion, but are unchanged in heart and purpose; easily moved in this direction or that, like the waves of the sea, driven by the winds and tossed; fickle and passionate; crying "Hosanna" to-day and "Crucify" to-morrow; no real love, though much speech; quickly

yielding the produce of the shallow soil, but beneath hard as adamant. They take the solemn sacrament in the morning, but have violated the solemnest sanctions of human life by night-fall. Of such the verdict of our Lord is only too true. "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." They remind us of those who gathered round the Master during His earthly ministry, attracted by the eloquences of His teaching and the splendour of His miracles, but to whom He would not trust Himself, because He knew what was in man.

The Second Circle. II. *The next Circle was formed by the Seventy Elders, together with Aaron and his two sons.* They ascended the mountain-side, some distance beyond the barrier, at the express invitation of Jehovah. They were allowed a closer approach, but still the restriction remained—"Worship ye afar off."

The Vision. They were not allowed to come near. Israel beheld no similitude of God at the giving of the Decalogue (Deut. iv. 12, 15); but the narrative at this point suggests that these favoured men were permitted to behold some appearance of the Divine Being who had invited them for this purpose. Moses beheld the form of the Lord (Num. xii. 8), Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon the Throne (Isa. vi. 1). For Ezekiel there was the appearance of a man upon the throne (Ezek. i. 26). What the Elders saw we cannot tell, but the mention of *feet* suggests a human form. Might not this have been an anticipation of the Incarnation? We are told that Melchizedek was made like unto the Son of God, and it may be that there are unexplored mysteries in those wonderful words of Genesis: "Let us make man in our image after our likeness!" But four interesting remarks are appended.

The Sapphire Pavement. (1) *"There was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone."* The blue sapphire is one of the loveliest of jewels, reminding us of the deep azure of the sky, the blue of Geneva's Lake or the glacier-fissure, the bluebell and the Alpine flowers. Depth, distance, serenity, calm, gentleness, and peace shine in unrivalled beauty through the sapphire rays, as though pouring from exhaustless fountains. The evident intention was to set forth the milder glories of God's character, as reconciled with Israel, in contrast to those more terrible manifestations which accompanied the giving of the Law, and had filled the hearts of the people with awe. As we think of that sapphire work we are inclined to exclaim, Oh, the depth, not only of the wisdom, but of the Love

of God! Above us is *Love in Excelsis*; beneath us is *Love in Profundis*; within are Love and Peace as an ocean; behind us is Love from everlasting; before us is Love to the uttermost. It besets us behind and before. It is about our path and our lying-down. It provided our mother's breast at birth, and will provide the soft bosom of mother-earth for our resting-place, when our spirit will have been received into the Father's Home, which Love hath gone to prepare. And in the meanwhile it paves our way thither with sapphire.

The Unclouded Splendour. (2) "*As it were the body of Heaven in its clearness.*" Did not this represent God's transcendence, His superiority to the thunder-storms that darken the lower skies, His independence of the clouds, which at the best form His temporary vesture and hiding-place? The terrors of the Law were laid aside; here was unclouded clearness, light, love, and forgiving grace. All their sin was removed so far as the east is from the west, and blotted out as a thick cloud. Too often our vision of God is dimmed and beclouded by the earth-born clouds which originate in the misconceptions and sins of our own hearts. If only we were more careful to guard against these, and to keep an open firmament between the waters above and the waters below, dividing the Heavenly from the Earthly, and the spiritual from the sensual, how much more often would we dwell under the very heaven for clearness!

The Security of the Nobles. (3) "*Upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand.*" This sentence bespeaks some surprise. Evidently they had ascended with considerable alarm, and their families were awaiting their return with some anxiety. It is clear that if they had never returned nobody in the camp would have been very much surprised. We are always thinking that God will lay His hand on us. We take our pleasures sadly, because afraid to seem too happy. We love our dear ones with a nervous dread, lest if we love them too well they will be snatched from us. We speak of thunder and lightning and earthquake as "the act of God." We hardly dare think of a spell of unmitigated and unclouded delight, lest God should overhear our thoughts and hasten to mingle some sour with the sweet, some alloy with the pure gold. It is very sad, because such conceptions of God shed a sombre shadow on our life's landscape and shut out the sunshine. What a contrast there is between the thoughts of many children of God and the outbursts of the Psalms! Even Jeremiah in his Lamentations affirms that He doth not afflict willingly, *nor grieve the children of men!* Do let us put

out of our minds these hard and hurtful thoughts. We are accepted in the Beloved, and ours is the God Who is *only good* (Ps. lxxiii. 1, R.V., marg.). Dare to believe that all is love, only love, pitiful and tender, rejoicing in human joy. Let us rejoice in every good thing which God gives, always believing that the last will be best, and that there will be sugar at the bottom of the cup. Do not believe that He will lay His hand on you, except to anoint and bless.

The Divine Condescension. (4) Also *they saw God, and did eat and drink*. Some people eat and drink without beholding God; others behold God, and are too shy or afraid to eat and drink; but evidently these seventy elders were perfectly at their ease. As they were engaged in the sacrificial meal, feeding, it may be, on the reserved remnants of the peace-offerings, slain earlier in the day (ver. 5), they became conscious of the near presence of God; and it did not affright them. When in the village inn, the Stranger who had so greatly commended Himself to Cleopas and his friend had taken the bread, and blessed, and broken it, their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; so was it as these elders ate of the peace-offerings, which were specially distinguished from the other offerings and sacrifices as being a feast of fellowship and communion between the human guests and the Divine Host. We are reminded also of Christ's words, Who tells us that He stands at the door and knocks, to be first assured that He will be welcomed, and that then He will come in to sup with us, and we with Him. But in this case He brings the sacred victuals with Him, as Melchizedek did, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings.

What Might Have Been. It was thus that these men, to whom Moses entrusted the care of the camp during his approaching absence, were prepared for the ordeal to which they were to be exposed. Abraham was prepared for the assault of the King of Sodom by the previous advent of Melchizedek. Our Lord—may we not say it reverently?—was fortified by the passion of the Passover which immediately preceded it. And if these elders had only realised the full significance of that meal, that vision, that consciousness of the Divine Presence, they would have stood like rocks against the clamour of the people for the golden calf. But it was not to be, and we can never forget that they at last perished in the desert, whilst Nadab and Abihu were consumed by fire on the very threshold of their priestly office. How near we may come to harbour, and yet be shipwrecked! Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous, and

certainly he enjoyed unusual revelations of God, but he fell on an ignominious battlefield, and his name is handed down through the ages as an arch-tempter. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." It is possible to pass from the communion table to perdition.

The Circle of Joshua. III. *The Circle represented by Joshua.* If the first and lowest circle represents those who are satisfied with the outward show of moving religious spectacles; and the second those who are capable of some glimpses into the eternal, which, however, have no permanent effect on character; this higher circle, with its solitary occupant, Joshua, may stand for the eager piety of many in the ranks of young manhood or womanhood, which lacks as yet the perfect vision of a Moses, but will be satisfied with nothing less. These have already fought and won their fight with Amalek. Amalek stands for the flesh, and Joshua had routed the Amalekite hosts before he came to Sinai, therefore he could stand nearer the centre than others, who were only occupied with the lower attractions of the meal, of which they ate and drank, apparently deriving nothing beyond. We must have met and conquered the Amalek of the flesh, if we are to see God. The child of appetite cannot climb to, and cannot breathe in, that rare atmosphere. Spiritual things are only discerned by spiritual senses, and our spiritual faculties are developed just in proportion as we crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. But the spiritual force that is generated in obedience and conflict will carry the soul triumphantly through the forty years of wandering, and bring it into the land of Canaan, where it shall lead the hosts into the rest of God. Only Caleb and Joshua of all that host were destined to that supreme privilege!

The Circle of Moses. IV. *The last and highest circle of approach to God is represented by Moses.* "And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to Me into the Mount, and be there. . . . And Moses rose up and his minister Joshua; and Moses went up into the Mount of God." But as they drew near the cloud which covered the Mount an arrest was placed upon their further advance. Though summoned, Moses went no further, until he received a further invitation. For six days the two waited, absorbed in prayer and meditation, and on the seventh Moses heard his name uttered from out of the midst of the cloud. Leaving Joshua to await his return, he entered the excellent glory, which to those beneath appeared like devouring flame; and as we see him enter we can only repeat the words of the

Psalmist: "Blessed is the man, O Lord, whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that He may dwell in Thy courts!" When shall that day appear when we also shall see Thy face, and have Thy name written on our foreheads? Grant to us grace, when our name is called, to be so clothed in the righteousness of Christ that we may not be ashamed or turned back!

VII

IN THE MOUNT WITH GOD

EXODUS xxv. 1-9

1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.
3. And this *is* the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass,
4. And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair*,
5. And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,
6. Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense,
7. Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate.
8. And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.
9. 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*.

VII

IN THE MOUNT WITH GOD

EXODUS xxv. 1-9

The Import of Moses and the Cloud. When we finished our last chapter, the impression may have been left that the entrance of Moses within the cloud was an emblem of the moment of our passage at death from the earthly house of this physical body to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. But that is not the lesson derived from this incident in the New Testament. It is used there as the emblem and symbol of that Divine fellowship to which we are summoned during this mortal life, when all, with unveiled face, may behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and beholding, be changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

The Tabernacle. Great as had been the service rendered by Moses in the Exodus and the Red Sea, in the march through the wilderness and the giving of the Law, there was other and perhaps more important work to be done in the erection or ordering of the Tabernacle, and in translating into material forms the recondite and sublime spiritual truths which were to be enshrined there for centuries, and figuratively for all time. It was for this purpose that he was summoned within the encircling cloud. "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."

The Preparation of Moses. Moses, Stephen says, was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt (Acts vii. 22), but that wisdom, which was intellectual and earthly, would not help him here, though it might be serviceable in translating into human thought and speech the mysteries that were to be communicated to the artificers and the crowd. But the natural (physical) man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and he cannot know them, says the Apostle, because they are spiritually discerned. It was necessary, therefore, even for Moses to become aware of the things of the Spirit of God by another organ of cognition, namely the spiritual faculties, which alone are capable of receiving and understanding the things of the

Spirit. In modern parlance, this organ of spiritual cognition is described as *subliminal consciousness*, and in similar phraseology. But we prefer to use the expressions of the Apostle, which are clear and simple. He distinguishes between the wisdom belonging to this world and its leaders, who are soon to pass away, and the wisdom of God which is hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed to babes, to those of the child-heart, who are spiritually-minded, who live and walk in the use of their spiritual vision, for there God's Spirit draws aside the veil, so as to reveal, intuitively and at a glance, the deep things of the Divine nature. Among human beings, pursues the Apostle, who knows a man's inner thoughts except the man's own spirit within him? and if we are to know God's inner thoughts it must be by His Spirit! But Spirit communicates only with Spirit, as in wireless telegraphy the transmitter and the receiver must be in perfect accord. It is clear, therefore, that the mind of Christ can only be made known by His Spirit to the spirits that have become percipient and receptive. We can now understand why Moses was left waiting for six days on the threshold of the great revelation, that he might lay aside his own wisdom and become perfectly attuned to the Spirit of Revelation, who was prepared to communicate the deep things of God.

Its Meaning for Us. Need we emphasise this profound lesson? By the new birth most, if not all, of the readers of these pages have been born of the Spirit, but probably they do not realise that, just as in natural birth they were born into the natural world, with an apparatus to apprehend it, so in the new or second birth they were born into the spiritual world, with an apparatus suited for it. The mistake, however, is that whilst they have never ceased to use the apparatus of the human body to receive through it the impressions of the outer world and react on it, yet they have allowed the senses and powers of these spirits to atrophy from disuse. Ah, the pity of it! Our mothers, nurses and friends did their best to train us in the use of the one, but we have had so few to help us to use the other. Like young eaglets, we have trembled on the edge of the nest, and if our Heavenly Father has threatened to break up our nest, and precipitate us out on the steeps of air, we have violently protested against His cruelty and have clung to the tattered remnants of the nest, dreading to use our enfeebled and useless wings, which might have borne us sunwards.

When Moses was entirely yielded to the Spirit's guidance and

teaching he was able to discern things which before had been hidden. "The spiritual man discerneth all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man."

(1) The Plan of the Tabernacle. (1) *He beheld the perfect Plan.* "According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it" (ver. 9). These words repeat themselves like an echo among the mountains. Sometimes at least they strike the ear from now until the Fall of the Second Temple was close at hand (Heb. viii. 5); and when Scripture in its comparatively narrow compass repeats one injunction so often, we may be sure that it deserves to be deeply pondered, and made one of the outstanding factors of life.

The whole Tabernacle, in all its courts and hangings, its altars and furniture, stood complete in the mind of God, and may have been represented by its Architect in a visible form. This at least is suggested by the use of that word *pattern*. Was some outward fashion of the Tabernacle presented to the eye of Moses, to help heart and mind to comprehend the Divine conception? Was some fairy shape created out of rainbow mist? Were curtains woven on the looms of wise-hearted angels? Were ark and altar, boards and hangings, table and laver reproduced of that same stuff of which dreams are made? Within the precincts of cloud, on some mountain level, did a visible pattern stand forth of what Moses was to reproduce upon the desert sand, that, carrying the picture in his eye, as well as in his soul, he might be able exactly and accurately to reconstruct it? If so, when the completed structure stood on the desert sand, he alone must have been disconsolate, amid the many rejoicing crowds, as he contrasted the very best that their united talents and gifts could produce, with what he had seen when he was on the Mount.

The Plan of our Lives. There is a profound lesson here. All our life has been preconceived in the mind of God, and every son and daughter is called, not only to see His face and live, but to behold the plan and pattern of life, which has to be reconstructed in actual living, so that we may say with our Lord, "The Son can do nothing of Himself—He can only do what He sees the Father doing; for whatever He does, that the Son does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and reveals to Him all that He is Himself doing. And greater deeds than these will He reveal to Him, in order that you may wonder. . . . The words I speak are those which I have seen in the presence of the Father" (John v. 19; viii. 38, *Weymouth*).

Three Attitudes Towards Design and Order. There are three sorts of men. First, those who care only for the forms of things. They have no ideals, they form no purpose. Without any upward or heavenward glance they day by day drift forward on the current of any whim or caprice, before the light and variable gales of fashion. To do the behest of the hour, in good form, and at the impulse of the moment, or at the call of routine and habit, is all they desire or concern themselves with.

There is a higher type of manhood than that. We know many who have some positive plan or programme of what they would like to make of their lives. The poet, the artist, the inventor of gems, the discoverer—each of these works more or less to a pattern which has been the dream of their boyhood, and with much witchery it has beckoned them to follow. They have seen a pattern, though it has not been shown them where Moses saw his, and they have not the driving-force on the one hand, or the sense of absolute assurance on the other.

A More Excellent Way. Each of these falls beneath the conception presented in the text, of the man who is accustomed to live in the presence of God, and who believes that of every year, of every month, and of every day there is a complete pattern. The ideal of his friendships is there, and he expects to be led from one stage into another of tender intimacy and ennobling intercourse. The ideal of his marriage, the ideal of his home, the ideal of his business-life, the ideal of each summer holiday, the ideal of the manner in which he is to pass home to God—each is there on the Mount, and he is at perfect peace, only desiring to build as near as may be to the pattern which lives in the thought of God. The same thought is contained in that assertion of Eph. ii. 10, R.V. "For we are His workmanship [the Greek word is *poiēma*] created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them."

The Secret of a Blessed Life. This is the secret of a blessed life. Do not be driven by circumstances; do not be shaped by Fate or Destiny; do not sullenly follow out your own plan and scheme, but continually hide yourself in God, wait your six days, as Moses did, and see the perfect pattern you are afterwards to reproduce. In some cases it is shown in early childhood, and from the first the young prophet, like Jeremiah, hears God saying: "Before I formed thee . . . I knew thee; . . . I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations, . . . to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever

I shall command thee thou shalt speak." In other cases, the pattern is revealed piecemeal. We are asked to weave a curtain, or make an altar, or shape a plank, and we have no sort of idea what they will look like when all are placed together. It will be a discovery indeed when some faithful souls who lived by the day, doing just the day's work, will awake to see an invisible hand composing the disjointed pieces, and building them together as a fair temple for the habitation of God through the Spirit. Be of good cheer, you are building for Eternity!

If it be asked what we see when we are alone with God, we may answer with great reverence that we behold the nature of our Lord, standing forth as the perfect Exemplar, the Heavenly Pattern. His character, words, sufferings, most blessed obedience unto death, His absolute devotion to the Father's will—these are the pattern. He left us an example that we should follow in His steps. As the holy Apostle John puts it, we are to walk even as He walked, we are to purify ourselves as He is pure, we are to be righteous as He is righteous, and as He is, so are we to be in the world.

(2) **The Significance of its Details.** (2) *Moses saw also into the significance of the various parts of the pattern.* We are told in Exod. xxxi. 18 that when God had made an end of communing with Moses upon Mount Sinai He gave unto him the two tables of stone. That word *communion* is very significant, because it implies intercourse and reciprocity of thought.

—**How Revealed.** By its very nature, communion involves speech between two parties; and when we learn that God *communed* with Moses, it could not for a moment be implied that there was a monologue, and that God poured an uninterrupted stream of instruction into the mind of Moses, without a remark or response on his part. We must believe, on the contrary, that there was a perpetual interchange of question and answer. In this narrative, from this chapter to the verse just now quoted, Moses gives an account of what happened on the Mount, but makes no announcement of his share in it. He dwells only on what God said; but that word *communion* compels us to interpolate at nearly every paragraph the reverent inquiries, and probably the adoring ejaculations, of the human pupil.

A Reminiscence of Moody. Some years ago, when Mr. Moody, sitting in the porch of his home at Northfield, was talking with me about his British friends, he gave a very tender and appreciative

characterisation of Dr. Andrew Bonar, whom he greatly admired and revered. He told me several things that Dr. Bonar had said, which had made a profound impression on his mind, and it is to that rich and devout imagination that the following paragraphs are due. They are the reproduction, in a very halting fashion, of faraway words, blurred and dimmed by the abrasion of many years. I admit that probably the conception is too materialistic, but it is at least vivid enough to live as a rich mosaic on the walls of our imagination.

The Questions of Moses. There stood the Tabernacle; in vision it may have been life-size. Moses may have been able to walk through the rainbow mists, the golden wreaths of light, in company with God, and to stand, so to speak, with God side by side in the Most Holy Place, or in the Holy Place, with its seven-branched candlestick and shewbread table. As they passed through, and paused at the laver, or the great brazen altar, or the furniture of the Holy Place, may we not suppose that Moses reverently questioned God as to the inner meaning of each separate item? He does not give us the inner significance in these chapters. It would have been unintelligible to that age, but, no doubt, God would explain it to His faithful servant.

The Cherubim. "Why, O Most Holy God, do those cherubim bend over that ark?" "It is because angels see, in that which the ark represents, mysteries which they desire to fathom."

The Lid. "And why is the ark covered by that golden lid?" "It is because the obedience of the Christ to the holy law will one day meet and cover its entire demand, as contained in those tablets of stone beneath."

The Veil. "And why this heavy veil?" "Because the worshipper must, in the first instance, be excluded, and only after centuries have passed will it be rent, so that those that love Me may come and enjoy the fellowship thou art enjoying now."

The Candlestick. "And why that seven-branch candlestick?" "To set forth the light which must shine through Israel to the world."

The Table. "And why that shewbread table?" "Because the life of the Christ is to be the bread of the whole world."

The Incense. "Why this incense?" "Because as the fragrance of the incense is grateful to the nostrils, so the prayers of My people are pleasant and delightful to Me."

The Laver. "But why this great laver?" "Because those who come near Me must ever wash themselves, their feet and hands, which had become befouled."

The Altar. "And this brazen altar standing here, why so large, why those horns?" "Ah," the answer might have been, "that is to represent the supreme act where My love is to make an Atonement for the sins of the world."

Do not you think therefore, that God was led by Moses' questions, as they communed together, deeper and deeper, to interpret the very heart and mysteries of the Atonement, until Moses understood, as perhaps no other man has understood, even in New Testament times, the whole drift, and plan, and conception of God's redeeming love? What a marvellous talk that must have been! It seems almost as if the Spirit anticipated the Epistles to the Hebrews, the Romans, the Ephesians, and the Colossians, and the deep and holy teaching of St. John.

A Present Possibility. "They communed together". That is possible for us still—communion with God—not simply to read the Bible and to take chapter after chapter in the order in which they stand, but that we should commune with God through the Word, standing on our Sinai every morning, face to face, in communion with Him, asking Him questions about all things which perplex and startle us, and receiving the plan of life and duty.

(3) The Men for the Building. (3) *Moses also beheld the agents through whom the Fabric of the Tabernacle was to be constructed and the source of the necessary materials.* It is more than probable that Moses had no knowledge of the genius and skill which were maturing in Bezalel and Aholiab. Their unique qualifications were a complete discovery when he heard of them from the Spirit of God. The very phrase *See*, with which their names were first uttered, seems to denote that they were to break on Moses with a kind of startlement: and it must have been bewildering to learn that there was in the camp a sufficiency of material for the execution of the work, and still more a disposition to make over these riches for such an object. Had he been thrown on the resources of his intellect and experience, Moses would have been at his wits' end to discover either artificers or materials for the gigantic task, which would cost at least a quarter of a million of pounds sterling. Like Andrew, he would have wondered, "Whence shall we buy bread?" But as he stood there with God in the Mount of Vision, all was disclosed. We will deal with these at length in future chapters, but in the meanwhile to any who stand bewildered before some great programme, which requires workers and materials, we would say, Do not worry and yield to nervous misgiving, but go and stand with God upon the Mount.

VIII

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

EXODUS xxv. 10-22

10. And they shall make an ark *of* shittim wood: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.

11. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make up on it a crown of gold round about.

12. And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put *them* in the four corners thereof; and two rings *shall be* in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it.

13. And thou shalt make staves *of* shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.

14. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.

15. The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it.

16. And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee.

17. And thou shalt make a mercyseat *of* pure gold: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.

18. And thou shalt make two cherubims *of* gold, *of* beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.

19. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: *even* of the mercyseat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof.

20. And the cherubims shall stretch forth *their* wings on high, covering the mercyseat with their wings, and their faces *shall look* one to another; toward the mercyseat shall the faces of the cherubims be.

21. And thou shalt put the mercyseat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.

22. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercyseat, from between the two cherubims which *are* upon the ark of the testimony, of all *things* which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

(See xxxvii. 1-9 for the realisation of this pattern.)

VIII

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

EXODUS xxv. 10-22

The Tabernacle an answer to Man's need. There is much in the earlier paragraphs of this chapter to startle us, because it seems as though a backward step had been taken in the education of the chosen people. When they emerged from the land of Egypt, they worshipped the Almighty without Tabernacle or Temple. The stars lit the way to fellowship and communion; and under the expanse of the sky, with its depths of fathomless blue, they worshipped the Father Who is in heaven. Was it not a retrograde policy on the part of Moses to erect a Tabernacle in which God should dwell, and in which He should hold fellowship with His people? Not so, because what is vague and insubstantial will fail to grip and hold the heart and conscience of man. He needs not the universe only, but a home; not an extended vault of sky, but some holy spot where the bush burns with fire. It is profoundly important for man to have a definite and concrete thought of God, in order that he may rise from that to the abstract, and discover the fire of God burning at every point and pinnacle of existence. For such reasons God said to Moses, "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (ver. 8).

The Structure of the Ark. In the inmost recess of that house Moses was ordered to place the throne from which God's presence would be immediately revealed, and the lambent flame of the Shekinah shine with pure and awful radiance. We need not enter upon prolonged discussion of the construction of the Ark. It was a box of acacia-wood, three feet nine inches long, two feet three inches wide, and two feet three inches deep. Upon the lid lay a slab of solid gold, valued at £25,000 of our money, which was shadowed by the wings of the bending cherubim, as they knelt apparently looking together into the mysteries of which that slab of gold spoke.

The remainder of the Ark was gilded within and without with gold, and the whole must have become encrusted with blood, as the High Priests, year after year, besprinkled it with the blood of the victims slain on the Day of Atonement.

Its Import. All this was a parable for that time and for all time, "the Holy Spirit thus signifying" (Heb. ix. 8). That quotation is very pertinent to the understanding of these symbols, because of the distinct statement that there was a divine intention in their construction. Are we not told that God spake of old time by divers portions and in divers manners (Heb. i. 1)? This is one of those manners. He spake to man in the Holy Scriptures, on the history of the chosen people, and in the very apparatus which is so minutely furnished in these pages.

An Abiding Meaning. We must remember that God is One, and that His Truth is One. He did not pursue one method of salvation with the Hebrew and another with the Christian. There is no variation in the essential principles of moral or spiritual truth, whether stated in the Old Testament or the New. There may be an ever-growing and clearer appreciation and understanding of truth, but truth is immutably the same. As, therefore, we look into these symbols we shall encounter the same eternal facts of Redemption as those that underlay the death of the Cross, and which must underlie for evermore the Divine attitude towards those who shall have been redeemed from among men. God is the same, His years fail not, the thoughts of His heart shall endure for ever, and in studying these old-world emblems we shall be treading in the first steps of the Creator, Redeemer, and Moral Ruler of men.

There is an incidental lesson here for us all. The Tabernacle with its contents was the subject of much Divine thought and care. It was not a poor hut run up in an hour. It was not the creation of human fancy. Man was not the creator, but the executor of the Divine programme and plan. It was thus that God made the heavens and the earth. He was alone when the foundations of the heaven and earth were laid. To Him alone must be attributed, also, the pattern of the human life of our Lord, in which the Tabernacle was duplicated in flesh and blood. And He is intimately concerned in the fashioning of all our life. In the minutest details He is immediately interested; and in the Most Holy Place of our nature, within the veil, there is a shrine, where angels might tread with reverence, because His holy presence is there.

The Ark as a Symbol. 1. *The Ark of the Covenant.* This wooden box, underlaid and gilded with gold, was the symbol of God's presence with His people. Its presence in the camp, as we shall see, indicated that the God of their fathers was amongst them, their fellow-pilgrim across the desert waste, sharing their anxieties, fighting their battles, sorrowing in their griefs, entering into that sympathetic companionship which was a perpetual source of inspiration and comfort. In all life there must be movement and change. We go forward because the Cloud beckons, and to linger behind would forfeit the manna and the safeguard. But the foreign becomes familiar, and the lonely is peopled with loving presences when God's sensible presence is with us.

The Ark at Jordan: and its Lesson. When Israel came to the swellings of Jordan, before the touch of the feet of the priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant, the floods fled right and left, leaving a passage for the hosts. They had not passed that way before, but the way was cleft for them. Do you ever ask what will you do at the swellings of Jordan? Do you fear that heart and strength will fail? Do you dread the touch of the cold water? Do you wish that you had lived in days when bushes burned with fire, when voices spoke from the Mount, when the Angel seemed visibly to precede the host, when the Captain of the Lord's host stood with drawn sword, and One like the Son of Man walked the glowing embers with His faithful witnesses? There is no need to cherish such backward yearnings. There is a Presence with us, a Divine Companionship, the Angel of the Covenant, the Christ of God! Like a voice ringing down a mountain-ravine, we hear His imperishable words, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end." Shall we not answer: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me"? Even if our emotions have not yet realised the experience, yet let our faith affirm the fact with unfaltering emphasis.

The Ark at Jericho: and its Lesson. When Israel approached Jericho, and the high walls, built up to heaven, threatened to be an impassable barrier, "Joshua called unto the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord." "And the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed the priests." "And the rearward came after the ark." "So the ark of the Lord compassed the city." It was not the march of the priests, nor blast of the horns,

nor the shout of the people, but the presence of the Ark of the Lord of the whole earth that levelled those mighty obstacles.

So will it always be for those who abide in the secret of the Lord. For them the mountains and the hills shall be made low, before them difficulties shall be dissipated as heaps of chaff. When the soul, in dismay, as it faces the walled cities, asks, "Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?" it turns with strong faith to the Almighty Christ, saying, "Wilt not Thou, O Son of God?" and as the result, the triumphant cry rings out: "Through Him we shall do valiantly, for He it is that shall tread down our adversaries."

The Ark in Captivity: and its Lesson. When Israel had grievously sinned, and the Ark of the Covenant was forfeited to the Philistines—as though, since the Divine presence had departed, the symbol must also depart—wherever the Ark was borne, it carried destruction to the idols and populations of Philistia. Dagon was found on successive mornings fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the Lord, and only the stump was left. The people were smitten with sore diseases, so that they said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to His own place" (1 Sam. v. 11). It was necessary for Jehovah to vindicate the symbol of His presence, and the fear and awe of Him falling on the Philistines laid them open to the sore ravages of the plague. It is the presence of God in the Church which is the sole talisman of victory. When we realise that He is in our midst, we cannot be moved, nay, we are more than conquerors. "Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it" (Isa. xix. 1). In these days of religious declension, throughout professedly Christian nations, we are too apt to say that the situation has passed beyond our powers to retrieve it. "And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head. And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon his seat beside the gate, watching the way [marg.], for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out" (1 Sam. iv. 12, 13, R.V.). Then the venerable judge fell backward and died, and the wife of the slain priest bore a son, and named him Ichabod, saying, "The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken." But when Israel had resumed its ancient attitude towards God, all this was altered. The Ark was replaced, because God was replaced

in the affection of His people; and the power of Philistia was absolutely and permanently broken by the successive victories of David and Joab.

How is it with You? How is it with you? Have the inward foes been too strong? Have they desolated your peace? Have they robbed you of the sense of God's redeeming grace? Dare to believe that whatever has transpired cannot break the Divine Covenant. It was *the Ark of the Covenant*, remember, which was seen by the divinely-instructed John when the Temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His Temple the Ark of His Covenant, (Rev. xi. 19). The Ark, of which we are speaking, may have perished when the Babylonians took the Holy City and burned the Temple; but the reality, of which it was the symbol, abides with the Church and the individual soul. God cannot break His Covenant. Though we believe not, *He abideth faithful*. He cannot deny Himself; and it is our Father's *good pleasure* to give us the Kingdom, *i.e.* victory over the power of appetite and passion. He will not give it grudgingly, or with niggard hand. He is only too glad to see us walking in the light of an unaccusing, uncondemning conscience. Only dare to affirm it. Dare to believe that notwithstanding all your failures and sins, He stands by His ancient promises, and that if you will but believe, even *you* shall see the glory of God in your restoration to that fair image which He conceived for thee before the worlds were made. Dare to step out on these immutable facts, which can no more be altered by your sinful changes than clouds can deflect the heavenly bodies in their constant order.

The Symbol Transient: the Facts Enduring. The symbol may pass, and must. Indeed, its transience was clearly foretold: "And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord; neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more" (Jer. iii. 16, R.V.). But the essential spiritual fact abides, to which the Apostle refers in that sublime series of questions, for which there is only one reply: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

The Mercy-Seat as a Symbol. II. The Ark was not only the symbol of the Divine Presence, *the Mercy-seat furnished a remarkable symbol of Divine Redeeming Grace*. The word rendered "Mercy-seat" really means "a covering," with special reference to the forgiveness and

covering of transgression and sin. The same word occurs in the Greek of the New Testament, where we are told by the Apostle that the Father hath set forth Christ to be a *propitiation*, through faith, by His blood, and in the passing over of sin (Rom. iii. 25, R.V.). The same Greek word is used in the Epistle to Hebrews to designate "the Mercy-seat" (Heb. ix. 5). So that we might render the first-quoted passage thus: "The Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a Mercy-seat."

Christ and the Mercy-Seat. In Jesus Christ the Divine and the human meet perfectly. It has been said, indeed, that the word Christ conveys the idea of Deity endowed with a familiar human element. Christ is the Divinely human, and the humanly Divine. "There are two words: God and man. One describes pure Deity, the other pure humanity. Christ is a word not identical with either, but including both. It is the Deity in which humanity has part, it is the humanity in which Deity resides. It is that special mediatorial nature which has its own double wearing of both, the ability to stand between and reconcile the separated manhood and Divinity."¹

There is so strong a trace of the same Greek word in that familiar passage of John's First Epistle: "He is the propitiation for our sins"—that there also we might read it, "He is the Mercy-seat for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." We can better understand, therefore, the inner meaning of the Divine Spirit, when, speaking of the Mercy-seat, He says, "There will I meet with Thee, and I will commune with Thee from above the Mercy-seat, from between the two Cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony."

Emmanuel: God With Us. When the High Priests entered within the veil, or the ordinary priests ministered before it, and they thought of the Shekinah shining above the Mercy-seat, they knew that God was there, not only in the terror of His majesty, purity, and holiness, but in His tender, redeeming, forgiving grace. His glory was there, not to slay, but to illumine, not to abash, but to attract. In fact, they might almost have adopted words afterwards to be spoken: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. v. 19). How good it would be if timid, doubting souls could take this to their hearts! They dread Him, stand aloof, feel that they are cut off and banished, whereas the love of God in Jesus Christ awaits them; broods in gentle, holy and

¹ Philips Brooks: *The Mystery of Iniquity*.

unabated light; waits to unfold the riches of His grace; and does not impute trespasses to the penitent and believing soul.

The Sprinkled Blood. The Mercy-seat must have become encrusted with blood, as, in successive years, succeeding High Priests, who were not permitted to continue by reason of death, sprinkled there the blood of the victims slain on the great Day of Atonement. Those slain were the perpetual remembrance of the atonements which had been made and accepted. So we think of Calvary, where precious blood was freely shed, and we remember that Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us, and that when He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Let us dare to believe, then, that God does not impute our iniquities to us, and let us draw near with a true heart, in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.

God's Abundant Mercy. It is a sweet word! A seat of mercy, baptised in mercy, from which mercy flows forth. Not wrath, not judgment, not indignation, but mercy is pouring forth from its original fountain in the heart of God. Compute the mercy around us in Nature, in the adaptation of music to the ear, of light to the eye, of savoury food to the palate! Consider the comfort and beauty of the world, the tender joys of home, the daily providence and care! Recall the mercy that burst forth into fresh expression at the manger-bed, and streamed from the wounds inflicted on the cross! Great and wonderful are all these, but they are crowned in the risen Christ. Let us realise, then, that the glorified nature of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, of the Lamb that was slain, is the trysting-place where God's mercy meets our sin and sorrow, our pain and grief, our fear and dread with infinite tenderness and sufficiency.

The Tables of the Law. III. Underneath the Mercy-seat and at the bottom of the Ark lay *the Tables of the Law* (Deut. x. 5). When the people sinned against God, and made the golden calf, the Law of God leapt from crag to crag, as though descending in a hurricane of judgment; but that was abnormal. Its usual position was to lie unseen and still beneath the Mercy-seat. How true a symbol this! Beneath all in God's universe—in the world, in the Church, and in God's dealings with men, there is the silent presence of law. Whatever storms sweep the sky, they do not disturb the silent beauty and order of Nature. Beneath the changes of the evolutions and revolutions there is the immutable precision of natural law, on which man

counts with absolute certainty. And what is true in Nature is true also in Religion. The Divine Mercy is exercised in accordance with Justice.

Mercy and Justice. Two Apostles insist on this. Paul says God showed forth His *Righteousness* when He set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation; and John says that He is faithful and *just* when He forgives sin. Our Saviour in His life and death magnified the Law and made it honourable. Not one jot or one tittle is allowed to pass unfulfilled. There is no fear that it will ever arise to take by the throat and demand payment from any whom God has accepted. If we may put it so materially—the gold of our Saviour's obedience even unto death is of the exact size and pattern of the demand of the moral law. When He said, "*It is finished*," He meant that nothing more need be added or subtracted, and that what He had done, He had done, mediatorially and sufficiently for us all. Does not this explain the presence of the blood-marks? Where the law comes in collision with our fallen race, there are always blood and tears, not only of each individual, but of one for another, and most of all by Him who stood as our Representative, who was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; on whom was the chastisement of our peace, and by whose stripes we are healed. Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Free from Law and Bound by Law. But though we are free from the law in one sense, we are subject to it in another. We have not to meet either its exactions or penalties, in the matter of our personal salvation. Its demands were met, its inflictions suffered, on our behalf, by the great Representative Man, in whom we stand. But we are under the law to Christ. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. iii. 31). "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4). "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (Rom. viii. 3, 4). Directly we accept the Mercy-seat, we bind ourselves more closely than ever to keep that law which is summed up in the one word, *Love*. We desire more than ever to please God. We do not obey to earn salvation, but being saved we obey. We do not work up to the Cross, but down

from it. The Holy Spirit writes the law, not upon tables of stone, but upon the fleshly tablets of the heart, so that we say with the Psalmist, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God, yea, Thy law is within my heart."

The Cherubim. Space forbids me to expatiate on the bending forms of the cherubim. They represented at once guardianship, reverence, inquiry, and worship. The Israelites were taught that their experiences, their lessons, their progress in the knowledge of God were of absorbing interest to beings beyond their ken. The very angels desired to look into the mysteries connected with their redemption (1 Peter i. 12). And we remember that on us also similar interest is concentrated; that as the drama of human history unfolds, the process is watched with absorbing interest by other eyes than man's; and that now to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places is being made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

IX

THE TABLE OF THE PRESENCE-BREAD

EXODUS xxv. 23-30; LEVITICUS xxiv. 5-9

23. Thou shalt also make a table *of* shittim wood: two cubits *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.

24. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about.

25. And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand-breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about.

26. And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that *are* on the four feet thereof.

27. Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table.

28. And thou shalt make the staves *of* shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them.

29. And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: *of* pure gold shalt thou make them.

30. And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me always.

5. And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake.

6. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord.

7. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon *each* row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, *even* an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

8. Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, *being taken* from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.

9. And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it *is* most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute.

(See xxxvii. 10-16 for the realisation of this pattern.)

IX

THE TABLE OF THE PRESENCE-BREAD

EXODUS xxv. 23-30; LEVITICUS xxiv. 5-9

The Table of Shew-bread: its Structure. The Table of Shew-bread, as we generally call it, stood on the right-hand side of the Holy Place, as the priests entered it. It was three feet long, a foot and a half broad, and two feet three inches high. It was thus quite a small table, narrow for its length, and rather below the ordinary height. It seems to have been regarded as of primary importance, because in this chapter its description follows immediately on that of the Ark. It was, like other articles, of acacia-wood, overlaid with pure gold; the surface was surrounded by an edging or border; and the legs were held together by a broad flat bar, which strengthened their framework. This is described as "the border of an hand-breadth round about." At the corners, or ends, of the legs, were rings, through which the staves were placed for its carrying, as is represented in the bas-reliefs on the Arch of Titus. The spoons, or incense-cups, the flagons and chalices were all of gold, and were employed for the libations and the burning of incense, which accompanied the weekly presentation of the twelve loaves, or cakes of bread.

The Shew-bread. These were renewed on each Sabbath-day, the stale ones being consumed by the priests in the Holy Place. The loaves were specially made of fine flour, and were known as "the bread of face," or "bread of presence," because they were set before the face or presence of God, who dwelt in the Holy Place, and the intention, so far as we can spell it out, was to suggest that, as man feeds upon the bread, which God gives in answer to his daily prayer, so man must provide the Divine Nature with food on which the Divine Spirit also may feed. Man cannot exist without the impartation of God's nature, and in turn must minister to Him what shall afford Him satisfaction. We are to walk worthy of God unto all pleasing. Our bodies are to be a living sacrifice acceptable to God. Probably the Lord's Supper was intended to convey this dual

thought. Whilst we eat of the bread and drink of the wine, which God has given to us in Jesus Christ, He also draws near to commune with us. Our Lord is His beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased; and our faith, love, obedience, and adoration provide Him with profoundest satisfaction.

Its Symbolism. The injunction was very precise: "Thou shalt set upon the table the Presence-bread before Me alway." In two passages it is described as "the continual bread" (Num. iv. 7; 2 Chron. ii. 4). When the trumpet gave the signal for the march, the loaves and vessels were left undisturbed in their accustomed places, and over them all three coverings were placed, of blue, of scarlet, and of sealskin. There was therefore no interruption of the continued symbolism of *the Unity of the chosen people*.

This thought pervades the Scriptures. If we go back to the days of the Judges, when the land was repeatedly swept by whirlwinds of judgment, when every man did as seemed right in his eyes, and there was no unity of government or authority, we find that the Presence bread was still offered with undeviating regularity. This is established by the incident told of David, when he sought the hospitality of the High-Priest at Nob, and "did eat the shew-bread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests" (Mark ii. 25, 26). Evidently, through those stormy centuries the twelve loaves still stood before God, an emblem of the essential unity of Israel. When, afterwards, schism came, and the ten tribes, under the leadership of Jeroboam, broke away from the house of David, still upon the holy table, in Solomon's temple, the twelve loaves were presented, representing an unimpaired oneness.

So when Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord, that had been broken down by Jezebel's orders, he took *twelve* stones, "according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name." In the prophet's thought, as in God's, the sorrowful strife and alienation between the northern and southern groups were as though they were not, in view of the Eternal Covenant, ordered in all things and sure.

A Witness to the Unity of the People. When the ten tribes were carried into captivity, and scattered far and wide through Babylonia, Persia, and Asia Minor, still each Sabbath the priests brought the twelve loaves, and placed them on the Table of Presence, as though God knew well where to find his scattered people, and in His judgment they continued one. Then followed the captivity of the seventy

years, and afterwards the return to the Temple of the priests, the people, and the holy bread. And in our Lord's time, though Israel was rent and scattered, and Simeon and Dan had long since disappeared, still the twelve loaves were presented; and in a remarkable sentence Paul, speaking before Agrippa of the promise made unto the fathers, expressed his belief in the unbroken number of the tribes, when he said: "Unto which promise *our twelve tribes*, earnestly serving God, night and day, hope to attain." In the opening of his epistle, James sends greeting to the twelve tribes of the dispersion. Our Lord assured His Apostles, that in the regeneration they should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. On the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem are written the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. Dan is indeed missed out of the enumeration of Rev. vii., but the sacred associations of twelve are still maintained by the dual representation of Joseph. Remember also Ezekiel's unfulfilled prophecy (xxxvii. 15, etc.).

The Unity of Christ's Church. Throughout this is one of those deep and subtle suggestions of the way in which the objective ideal of the Church, as an undivided and sacred unity, stands before God, upon the pure table of our Lord's nature, in which the gold of Deity and the shittim-wood of humanity blend. Amid all the storms that have swept the world since our Lord constituted His Church, throughout those disastrous periods of division and distraction, there have still been, in the Divine estimation, "one body, and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." Always the twelve loaves, the wine of His blood, and the frankincense of His merit, for we are made "accepted in the Beloved."

—**Not Necessarily a Visible Unity.** It need hardly be remarked that this unity was never intended to be organic, because Jesus prayed that His own might be one as the Father and He were one. "Holy Father," He said, "keep them in Thy Name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as we are." But the unity of the Godhead is clearly not physical, or visible, or organic. It is mystical and spiritual. It is therefore certain that those who suppose that the unity of the Church must be patent to the senses have wholly misconceived the Divine ideal. The members of the body of Christ were never intended to be gathered into one organisation, to repeat one formulary, or march in military array. Uniformity is far removed from unity; and you may have perfect unity

apart from uniformity. A tree is a unity, though there is a vast diversity between the gnarled branches and the cones which it tosses on the forest-floor. A house is a unity, though there is no similarity between the gabled roof and the deep-laid foundations. A body is a unity, but the eyelash differs widely from the bones of the skeleton.

Uniformity is impossible where there is life, as the most superficial consideration of the autumnal produce of orchard, field and garden proves. Wherever, therefore, Uniformity has been insisted on, death has ensued. Just before the Reformation of the sixteenth century, it seemed as though the Inquisition had extinguished every trace of nonconformity with the tenets and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, she might have almost literally adopted the proud boast of Babylon: "As one gathereth eggs that are forsaken, so have I gathereth all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or that opened the mouth, or chirped" (Isa. x. 14, R.V.). But at this period it is incontestable that the religious life of Christendom was dead; except where the limited Piedmontese, in the high Alps, kept a spark burning amid the grey ashes.

External Uniformity Unattainable. The same mistake is perpetrated by those who demand uniformity of creed as by those who insist on uniformity of ritual. You cannot make all men climb alike, or express identical conceptions in identical words. A creed is, after all, an intellectual effort, whereas religion is not the creature of the mind or reason, but of the heart and spirit. It is a life, the importation and reception of the divine nature, the inauguration of that eternal condition of existence which will be still young when all human formularies and conceptions have been put away, as a man puts away the things of childhood. If your soul is united to the Head of the Church by a living faith, through which the life of Christ enters and pervades it, you must be reckoned a member of the Body, though you may have passed through none of those ecclesiastical systems which at the best are but broken lights, reflecting the sunlight at different angles.

Variety Within the Church of Christ. In the Church there is room, therefore, for an infinite variety. Each brings his own contribution; and we must gather *with all saints*, if we would comprehend the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of Christ. You cannot see the whole sky, the whole mountain, the whole broad ocean, nor can I; but I will tell you what I have seen, tasted, and handled of the Word of Life, and you shall tell me what you have

experienced. Thus our spirits shall have fellowship one with another. There will be a mutual exchange in commodities, as we report our discoveries of the unsearchable riches of Christ. For none has exactly the same view-point as another has; and none exactly the same definition or formula. Be yourself! Make your own discoveries of the manifold grace of Christ. If you cannot bring grapes from Eschol, bring pomegranates or figs. Bartimaeus and the man born blind had different stories to tell of the way in which they were healed, but they both saw, and owed the sight which revealed the world to the same voice and touch. Whether you swam to shore or floated on a broken piece of ship-furniture, or a spar, makes very little difference, so long as you have been saved from the storm, and stand there with the rest in the circle round the fire lighted because of the cold. You are probably right in what you affirm, but wrong in what you deny. You are justified in holding firmly to your special fragment of Truth, but be willing to admit that you have not everything, and that others may be as conscientious, as true to truth, and as eager for its maintenance and diffusion as yourself. Seek to gain from others whatever will perfect your religious life, rounding it to a more complete circle, and touching it to finer issues. "I long to see you," said the Apostle, "that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift . . . that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith" (Rom. i. 11, 12, R.V.).

Christ the Bond of Unity. Christ is the bond of unity to His Church—Christ in each individual, and each individual in Christ. Let us never forget that gracious reciprocity. The sponge must be in the ocean and the ocean in the sponge. Each believer is written in the Lamb's Book of Life by the same fingers. Each of us has been grafted into the true Vine, though in different places. Each of us has some function in the mystical body. We were in Him when He died, and rose, and entered the Father's presence. In Him we have access into this grace wherein we stand. We are in Him, as those twelve loaves stood on that pure table. The gift of Christ, on the other hand, has been made to each one of us, that He might realise Himself through all the experiences of all His members. As of old it required *four* Gospels to reveal to mankind what Jesus Christ was, so all believers are required to set forth and exemplify to the world all the excelling glories of our Emmanuel. It is for this reason that we are told that the Church is His Body, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23). It demands a great multitude,

which no man can number, to reveal the full beauty of the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven.

—**All One in Him.** Was it not of this that our Lord spoke, when He said: "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them, and Thou in Me" (John xvii. 22, 23). In such radiance the Church now stands before God. He sees her essential unity. Its denial does not disintegrate it. Its obscuration does not impair it. The very members of the Church that compose the Unity may be unaware of it, and may denounce each other; but, even so, the twelve stones are in the same breast-plate and the twelve loaves stand side by side on the same table. The members of a large family of boys and girls may be scattered far and wide over the world, but to the mother, in her daily and nightly prayer, there is but one family, and to her they seem sheltered still under the wings of her brooding love.

When Savonarola was about to be burned, the Papal Legate, dressed in his scarlet robes, stood beside his scaffold, and cried: "I cut thee off from the Church triumphant and the Church militant." But the martyr replied truly: "You may cut me off from the Church militant, but over the Church triumphant thou hast no power." Only two things can cut a man off from the Holy Catholic Church, considered in her loftiest ideals, and these are unforgiveness to the brethren and departure from the living God.

But as surely as the Lord accounts us members of the same mystical Body, He bids us give diligence to *keep* the unity of that Body in the bonds of peace. We are not required to create the unity, but to *manifest* it. We are to recognise as one with us, those who may differ not only in their ritual, and credal expression, but in heart and spirit, giving no sign of recognition or fellowship; but, notwithstanding, we are to think of them as one with us. Without the other neither can be made perfect. Let us, therefore, in this way hasten the time when our Lord shall present the Church to Himself, a glorious Church, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing.

X

THE CANDLESTICK OF PURE GOLD

EXODUS xxv. 31-40; xxvii. 20, 21

31. And thou shalt make a candlestick *of* pure gold: *of* beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same.

32. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side:

33. Three bowls made like unto almonds, *with* a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, *with* a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick.

34. And in the candlestick *shall be* four bowls made like unto almonds, *with* their knops and their flowers.

35. And *there shall be* a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick.

36. Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it *shall be* one beaten work *of* pure gold.

37. And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it.

38. And the tongs thereof, and the snuff dishes thereof, *shall be of* pure gold.

39. *Of* a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels.

40. And look that thou make *them* after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount.

20. And thou shall command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always.

21. In the tabernacle of the congregation without the veil, which *is* before the testimony. Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the Lord: *it shall be* a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel.

(See xxxvii. 17-24 for the realisation of this pattern.)

X

THE CANDLESTICK OF PURE GOLD

EXODUS xxv. 31-40; xxvii. 20, 21

The Golden Candlestick. During the day, sufficient light entered through the porch to illumine the Holy Place, but as the night gathered artificial illumination was required. This was provided by the golden candlestick, referred to in the next paragraph of instructions given to Moses. As the closing sentence specifically enjoins the necessity of making all things according to the divine pattern, we are again reminded that all the events of Israel's exodus and pilgrimage, and all the items in the structure of the Tabernacle, were intended to be types and emblems of spiritual realities. We need, therefore, no preface of apology, in our endeavour to unfold those deep thoughts of the Divine Nature, of which we also partake, which underlie this piece of Tabernacle-Furniture. It was constructed on the pattern of eternal reality.

Its Form. Of the exact appearance of the seven-branched Candlestick there is no question, because it is figured in the Arch of Titus, and though the actual article carried off by the Roman Army could hardly have been the original one, there was probably an identity of form. It would be likely that the later artificers would have endeavoured, so far as possible, to repeat the ancient style with the upright central shaft culminating in a lamp, and the three curved branches on either side. It was fashioned by hand—"beaten work." Each branch was ornamented first with an almond flower or cup, above that a representation of the fruit of the pomegranate, and above that again of a lily blossom. The latter supported the lamp. The main shaft was to be similarly ornamented (vers. 34, 35). The gold out of which the candlestick was made is valued at £10,000 of our money, i.e. 40,000 dollars.

Its Place. On entering the Holy Place, as we have seen, in front was hung the veil, with the golden incense altar before it; on the right stood the table of shewbread, the twelve loaves of which, presented

weekly, betokened the unity of the people of God, and on the left was the candlestick, equally an emblem of the unity of the Divine race, and its light, therefore, glistened from the altar and the table. "They shall light the lamps thereof, to give light over against it."

Its Import. It is obvious, on the first vision of the candlestick, that it sets forth the ministry of Israel, later of the Church, and always of true religion, in their function of illuminating the world. But the fact that here the candlestick was heavily veiled from human vision, and shone in front of the veil, seems to indicate not primarily the attitude of the Church to the world, but the attitude of the believer toward God. Indeed, everything in the Holy Place bespeaks that attitude, the shewbread table providing the obedience upon which the Spirit of God may be said to feed, the incense altar providing the intercessory prayer which is fragrant to Him, and surely the seven-branched candlestick, glowing there—"a burning and shining light"—is the symbol of the people of God, ever giving back to Him the flame that they have first received from Him, so that the Eternal Spirit beholds His own nature reflected in them, and flashing back with glory to Him who gave it, as the suns and stars of space to some central luminary. First, therefore, we have the nature and function of true religion—it is a lamp that shines and burns; secondly, the nourishment of true religion; thirdly, the ministry of Jesus Christ, as He walks amid the seven golden candlesticks.

I. *The Nature and Function of true Religion.* Whether under the Hebrew or the Christian dispensation, or under any dispensation whatever, the religious life is always the same. It partakes of the nature of the Eternal God. For just as there was an essential oneness between the light of the Shekinah, which shone between the cherubim, and the sparkling light upon the seven-branched candlestick, so there is an equal similarity between the eternal nature of God and true religion, wherever you find it. God is often compared to Fire; and though that wonderful glow, that radiance, that fervour, that spiritual energy, which characterise the religious soul, are, of course, infinitely and incomparably small compared to the splendour of the Divine Nature, they are precisely the same in quality with their correspondents in God. God is a Spirit—a Spirit who is represented by fire and flame—and He seeks spirits to be enkindled with fire and flame to worship Him. But whilst there is an essential identity between the nature of God with the fire of its quick energy, its purity and its kindling, that fire dwells essentially and eternally

in Him; while with us it needs to be communicated, and therefore the seven-branched candlestick had to be *lit*.

The Spirit of the Man the Candle of the Lord. The spirit of man is, after all, only the candle of the Lord, and if the Church to-day contains many who are exemplifying the religious life with its quick energy and power, its purity and heat, it is only because they have been brought into contact with the glow of the eternal nature and have been kindled by the Divine Spirit (Prov. xx. 27). You may not know the hour or place when you, as a candle, were brought first in contact with Him. It may have been that a mother's hand in your early childhood brought you in contact with the great fire of Love in God's nature, and the tiny taper was ignited and began to burn. Or it may have been in later life, after standing for years as an unlit candle, with all the wealth of knowledge and power latent in you waiting for the spark, that you were suddenly illumined by the touch of God's Spirit, and began to burn and shine—but you never would have been what you are to-day unless there had been the communication of the fire from the altar of the Divine Nature to your heart. The candle had to be lit.

Its Lighting. You will observe that two conditions have to be fulfilled before the candle can be lit. First, there must be susceptibility of ignition; and second, there must be contact. It goes without saying that there is within each of us the susceptibility for God, because we were originally made in His likeness and came forth from His creative hand, but in some cases there has been no contact. Oh, that the hand of the Divine Saviour might be placed against your heart, and so bring you into contact with His heart, that you may catch the spark which leaps forth to kindle you for ever! When that fire is once lit, it burns for evermore. That is what our Lord meant when He said, "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light" (John xii. 35, 36). This is one of the deepest of His utterances. Probably something of the same thought was in the Apostle's heart when he said, "We are transformed into His likeness, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of God." The wick of the candle becomes absolutely transformed when it touches the central flame. Too many people resemble exquisitely prepared candles, the richest and best materials having been used in their manufacture, and it may be that they stand in golden candelabra, but all is useless because the flame has never been kindled. In some

of the pulpits of our Churches, and in positions of influence given to men in our Universities and Schools, we have the unlit candles, dowered with every gift, but waiting until the Divine spark shall illumine them. O soul of man, verily thou art missing thy mark in God's great world, and it is vain to attempt to realise thy great possibilities, until all the wealth of thy nature is ignited and unfolded by that Divine spark which trembles behind the veil, and which God waits to give to thee by a direct contact, such as would make thee glow and burn! One of the greatest things ever said of man was that phrase in which our Lord summed up the influence of John the Baptist—"He was a burning and a shining light." God grant that we may not have the cold light of the moon that shines, but does not burn, but of the sunlight, that fills the world with radiance and from the heat whereof nothing is hid.

Its Light. But if that is our attitude towards God to-day, kindled by Him, burning and shining in His presence, necessarily the world will become illumined. Light is gentle, and the influence of our character may be without voice or language, stealing through the office, the workroom, the social circle, or the home. Light is absolutely humble, falling equally upon the stick and stone, upon the young lambs as they play in the fields as it does upon the golden cross above St. Paul's; and wherever you find the true religion of Jesus Christ, the glow of it will illumine the most obscure corners as well as the more conspicuous platforms of your life. Light is unobtrusive, you do not see *it*; but only the objects on which its wavelets break. You are only conscious of the presence of light because of its revelation of the true nature of all things in heaven and earth. All things, says the Apostle, are made manifest by the light, for that which is made manifest is light. Light in man is twofold: the light of the intellect, which is derived, and the light of the heart, which is direct. Those that open themselves to the influence of God's Spirit have the latter in abundance. "He that is spiritual discerneth all things, and he himself is discerned of no man. . . . We have the mind of Christ."

II. *The Nourishment of True Religion.* Let us pass on to the book of Zechariah, where the candlestick reappears. The people had just come back from Babylon, and were confronted by terrible difficulties, arising first from the opposition of their enemies, and secondly from the incompetence of their leaders. It was then that the vision came to Zechariah. Although the temple was lying in waste, and all

around its materials were strewn in débris, and the hands of Zerubbabel were hanging helplessly by his side, the prophet foretold that as his hands had laid the foundation, so they would presently place the pinnacle upon the finished structure; and the vision of the candlestick was given, to assure the people that it would be so, because the power of God was working through them as the oil works through the wick.

The Candlestick. The inner thought of this vision is the wick. It is very insignificant, a piece of soft material which in itself can provide no flame; or at least, if it burns for a little, it soon becomes charred and smokes, but let it be dipped into the bowl of oil, and it will become the ladder by which the golden oil will climb up to illumine and burn. The wick is flexible, soft, and useless as a luminant; but it provides the material through which the oil passes and upon the edge of which it burns. On either side of that golden bowl was an olive tree, indicating, of course, the ministry of Joshua the priest on the one hand, of Zerubbabel the prince on the other—the priestly and the royal function converging to nourish the flame.

The Oil. It was a great comfort, then, that it was not for Israel to accomplish the work, but for God through Israel, and the comfort to us is apparent. There are times in life when the difficulties seem to be insurmountable, "O great mountain!" we cry. The weary length of the years seems to be too great to bear. We question how we shall endure. It is said that Daniel *continued*, but shall we? The night is so dark, and getting darker; the cold is so intense, and getting keener; the difficulties are so many, and becoming more and more perilous—can we last? Will it not be too great a responsibility to continue? Nay, for there is the bowl in which the coil of the wick lies, filled from the olive tree on either side, which for us denote the Priesthood and the Kingship of our Lord. Not the Aaronic Priesthood only, for were it so, it would have closed on Calvary; but the Melchizedek Kingship also, which is eternal. But not Kingship alone, else there would have been no priestly work to put away our sin. We require the work of the Priest as our sacrifice and the work of the King as our supreme Master and Lord. Christ in His twofold office pours into us the oil of the Holy Paraclete, for it is the Holy Spirit Who conveys the virtue of Christ to us. We have contact with Christ through Him. The Spirit of Christ is sent into our hearts, to maintain our living and conscious fellowship with the Infinite and Eternal. All we have to do is to become

steeped, and to let the wick of our faith lie deep in the oil of the unction of the Holy Spirit ministered to us from Jesus Christ, who, as mediator, has Himself received the Holy Spirit from the blessed nature of God. The one great necessity is to keep the golden pipe which conveys the oil always clean, and to see that it does not become clogged. Also let us not murmur if the golden snuffers are used. This, not unseldom, is absolutely necessary, because there is an undue preponderance of the wick, which has become charred and uneven, and needs to be removed. A large amount of the discipline of our life is intended to remove the frayed material of pride, selfishness, and depreciation of others, that we may miss none of our possibilities.

The Believer's Light. Abide in Christ, and let Christ abide in you. Draw upon your Lord; let the glory of the hidden Christ steal up into your daily living, so that amid the darkness of the world you may shine as lighthouses along the coast. Remember that the oil which is sold in the shops, or is stored in vast reservoirs, was brought from afar, and is the product of sunlight. It is, so to speak, liquid, sunlight and sun-heat. When you burn oil in your houses, you are actually burning the very light and heat which emanated from the sun. So if you are living as a servant-girl, or a clerk, or as the mother of a family, exhibiting amid the rushing life of our time a sweet, unobtrusive, gentle life, you are revealing the attributes of Deity—the sun-light and sun-heat of the very nature of God.

We must turn aside for a brief consideration of the oil, described by the prophet as “golden,” which was specially prepared for burning in the candlestick (xxvii. 20, 21; and Zech. iv. 12). It was to be pure olive oil, made from the unripe fruit obtained by beating and pounding in a mortar, and not by crushing in a mill. It gives a pure, bright light, with little smoke. It seems to have been part of the priestly duty to trim the wicks and light the lamps each night, affording sufficient of this oil for their flame to burn till day-break, when “the lamp of God went out” (1 Sam. iii. 3).

How Provided and Sustained. It was a favourite saying of M'Cheyne when discussing the method of pulpit preparation, that only beaten oil might be used in the sanctuary, intimating that careful preparation was required for all material presented for the consideration of our hearers. It is not a light thing to speak to men for God, and none of us should essay the holy task apart from very careful preparation; but when we have done our utmost in this, we must depend on the

kindling of the Divine fire. Ours is the beaten oil at the best, but what is that, unless the High Priest Himself shall cause the lamp to burn?

How often it seems as though God's brightest saints are they which have passed through the greatest pounding and beating. The Almighty Father cannot spare us aught that will promote our furthest and noblest influence. The crushed spice-plant, the broken leaf, the pounded olive, are emblems of hearts which have passed between the rollers of tribulation, and have yielded to God and man a sweet savour of life, which has filled the world. Let us treat all these with reverence. Let our sturdy strength tread with softened footfall in their august presence. Their face may be marred, and their bodily presence unpromising, but they inherit the earth.

III. *Our Lord's Personal Ministry.* The seven candlesticks, in the midst of which John beheld the ever-loving Christ, differed widely from the great seven-branched candlestick. That ancient symbol had all its lamps and branches springing from a single stem. Whereas in his vision, the seer saw seven distinct lamp-stands, with their lamps; representing the little Christian communities which shone amid the dense darkness of Asia Minor during the later decades of the first century. But the vision of the Christ watching, tending, nourishing, and trimming the light is surely necessary to any conception of the religious life, either of the individual or the Church. He is the true Light that lights us all; and He is the eternal necessity of all.

The Full Import. We must not allow this symbol to be watered down, as though it were only an expression for the abiding influence of His teaching and example. All that is true, but it is only a part of the truth. Through all the ages, and in every branch of the true Church, wheresoever two or three are gathered in His Name, He is there in the midst.

He is with us with eyes as a flame of fire, to detect the least infidelity of the heart or inconsistency in the life. He is there with feet like burnished brass, to tread down and destroy all that would set itself in opposition to His holiness or love. He is there to heal with the touch of His right hand, to irradiate with the light of His countenance, to correct, chastise, uplift, strengthen and comfort. To no angel-hand will He entrust either the golden snuffers or the golden oil. The nourishment and perpetuation of His Church is His peculiar office. Because He lives, we live also. As He was the Alpha, so He

will be the Omega of our faith. Nothing will be left unattempted that will secure the best of which we are capable. Only let us yield to Him, lest the fate which soon overtook those seven Churches should befall us; for in Asia Minor to-day, instead of the Christian hymn arising on those ancient sites, there is the perpetual cry of the muezzin from the minaret: "There is no God but God, and Mahomet is His Prophet." Such is the mystery of the golden candlestick.

XI

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TABERNACLE

EXODUS xxvi. 1-30

1. Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle *with* ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: *with* cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them.

2. The length of one curtain *shall be* eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure.

3. The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and *other* five curtains *shall be* coupled one to another.

4. And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of *another* curtain, in the coupling of the second.

5. Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that *is* in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another.

6. And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches: and it shall be one tabernacle.

7. And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair to be a covering upon the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make.

8. The length of one curtain *shall be* thirty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and the eleven curtains *shall be* all of one measure.

9. And thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shalt double the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tabernacle.

10. And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain *that is* outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops in the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second.

11. And thou shalt make fifty taches of brass, and put the taches into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one.

12. And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half-curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the back side of the tabernacle.

13. And a cubit on the one side, and a cubit on the other side of that which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, it shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it.

14. And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins.

15. And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up.

16. Ten cubits *shall be* the length of a board, and a cubit and a half *shall be* the breadth of one board.

17. Two tenons *shall there be* in one board, set in order one against another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle.

18. And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south side southward.

19. And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons.

20. And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side *there shall be* twenty boards:

21. And their forty sockets *of* silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.

22. And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards.

23. And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides.

24. And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners.

25. And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets *of* silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.

26. And thou shalt make bars *of* shittim wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle.

27. And five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the two sides westward.

28. And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end.

29. And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings *of* gold *for* places for the bars: and thou shalt overlay the bars with gold.

30. And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was showed thee in the mount.

(See xxxvi. 8-38 for the realisation of this pattern.)

XI

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TABERNACLE

EXODUS xxvi. 1-30

The Structure of the Tabernacle. It hardly falls within the purpose of this book to enter into an exact consideration of the structure of the Tabernacle. There has been much learned discussion as to the measurements, the question as to whether there was a ridge-pole, and so forth. These points are dealt with exhaustively in various Bible Dictionaries, and in works specially devoted to their elucidation. It is enough for us to know that the Tabernacle was a movable sanctuary, in length twenty-seven feet, and in breadth nine feet, surrounded by a movable courtyard, which enclosed it, the whole consisting of curtains of various fabrics.

—**Externally.** The framework of the structure was formed by boards of acacia wood, each of which was fifteen feet long by two feet three inches broad, twenty of them on either side, and eight at the back. They were threaded together by five horizontal bars; and stood in massive sockets of silver, which were sunk in the ground. Over this framework three sets of curtains were hung, which made the ceiling, and drooped over the boards. The *first* set of curtains consisted of ten widths, which were coupled together by loops of blue and clasps of gold. These composed the immediate covering of the sanctuary, visible to every eye that was permitted to view the sacred interior. They were made of fine twined linen of a soft white hue, something like our best Indian muslin, variegated by cords of blue, purple, and scarlet, with figures of cherubim woven into the fabric while yet upon the loom. Next to these was a similar series of curtains of goats' hair, such as the Arabs still employ as the ordinary covering of their tents. The soft inner wool of the Angora goat yielded itself readily to be made into a fine worsted, and was specially suitable for this purpose. It should be noticed that there were eleven breadths in these curtains, so as to admit of a portion hanging over the front and back of the structure, and also that they were longer

than the others, so as more fully to cover them and the wooden boards. Above these two layers of curtains was a third, of very tough and durable texture, which would also protect from rain and storm, being lined within by rams' skins dyed red, affording a kind of morocco leather, and on the outside consisting of seal or porpoise skins.

—**Internally.** Within the Tabernacle, dividing it into one-third the length, and two-thirds, the veil was hung of which we speak in the next chapter. It divided the Most Holy place from the Holy. The former formed a complete cube of nine feet, stood exactly in the centre of the hinder or western half of the court, and contained the sacred Ark. The latter contained the incense-altar, candlestick, and shewbread table.

Its Existence a Fact. The historicity of the Tabernacle has been assailed, but the defence given by Professor James Orr is sufficient to satisfy the candid mind, that the account as given on the pages of Exodus is justified by competent enquiry and adequate reasons. In 1 Sam. iii. 3 we come, incidentally, not only on the old name of the Tabernacle, but on mention of "the lamp of God" burning, as directed, all night; and in 1 Sam. xxi. 4, of the shewbread, the characteristic institution of the Levitical Code. In 2 Sam. vii. 6 it is made abundantly clear that, prior to the temple, Jehovah's dwelling was "a tent and a tabernacle," and that the Ark of God dwelt within curtains. We are not bound to suppose that the Tabernacle continued just as Moses constructed it for 480 years (according to 1 Kings vi. 1) without repair and renewal. Boards will not hold out for ever, curtains will wear out and become faded and torn. It would be impossible for the Tabernacle to retain the fresh and beautiful appearance it had at the first. But loving and skilful hands would carefully repair it from time to time, especially after the fearful outrages perpetrated on Shiloh by the heathen, after the days of Samuel, and described in that most plaintive of the Psalms, the lxxviiith. (See especially vers. 58–67.) The fact that the Ark was preserved with such jealous care until the days of Solomon, would suggest that the Tabernacle in which, with the exception of the brief period of its residence at a private house, it was enshrined, would be worthy of its significance and dignity.

Its Cost No Difficulty. In opposition to the objection that its costliness and skill were more than the Hebrew nation could compass at that time in their history, we must remember the increasing

testimony coming to hand in evidence of the high state of civilisation which the Egyptians had attained at the time of the Exodus. We may quote the opinion of an expert student of the subject, "that this description could only have been written by one who had seen the Tabernacle standing."

Its Import—God in Touch with Human Life. But what was the signification of this elaborate structure? We may give a fourfold answer to that question. (1) *It indicated the desire of God to share our human life.* "Let them make Me a Tabernacle, that I may dwell among them." The Hebrews were meant to feel that the God of their fathers was a fellow-pilgrim, that where they pitched He pitched, that their enemies, difficulties, and long toilsome marches were His. If His Tent was pitched among theirs, He surely was in the march. In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them. He bore and carried them all the days of old (see specially xxix. 42-46). When David proposed to build a substantial House, He answered, "Thou shalt not build Me an house to dwell in, for I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day; but have walked with all Israel" (1 Chron. xvii. 4, 5). The feeble-minded and fearful were of good courage, when there was the noise of war, or an expectation of the onset of the Amalekites, who were constantly skirmishing in the rear of the march. Was not God in the midst of them? they could not be moved, God would help them, and that right early. And little children, if they were startled at night by the howl or cry of the wild beasts of the wilderness, would take heart again, when their parents reminded them that the light that shone softly over the sleeping-camp issued from Jehovah's tent.

A Foreshadowing of the Incarnation. The hearts of men were thus familiarised with the Humanness of the Divine Nature. God was willing to dwell with man upon the earth, though the heavens could not contain Him. Obviously, however, there was a great gulf still to be bridged, especially for the more spiritual because there was no real union between the dwelling and its tenant; and godly souls waited expectantly for that still closer identification of God with man which was to be given in the Incarnation. Then the Word became flesh and *tabernacled* among men, and they beheld His glory, the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father. The fulness of the Godhead dwells still in a body fashioned after our own, and we

may say, in the words of the seer of Patmos, Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the hot sun of the desert smite them, nor any heat, because they shall be led to fountains of water, the emblem and fruition of the Promised Land.

The One God Declared. But (2) the Tabernacle also set forth symbolically certain great truths. It taught, for instance, *a sublime monotheism*. Embodied in every detail was the sacred formula, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is *one* Lord." The gods of the heathen were many. Crowds of them occupied the niches of the Pantheons; whilst innumerable temples and shrines filled even the most civilised cities. To be quite sure that amid the thronging multitude of their duties they had omitted none, the Athenians erected an altar to any unknown god that might have been unintentionally passed over, and might feel resentment. There was no trace of those divided religious interests. The *Unity* of Jehovah, as the one God of Israel, who was jealous of any rival, and who must be *Only* the object of His people's devotions, is the principal and most impressive affirmation in the Tabernacle, with its single inner throne.

God's Spirituality Attested. There was no image, no likeness. Pompey, with sacrilegious impetuosity, strode into the most holy place, notwithstanding the horrified dissuasions of the priests, and came out expressing his wonder that there was no idol or fetich. The holy Light burned there between the bowing forms of the cherubim, reflected from the Golden Mercy-Seat, and that was all. It seemed as though already the words of our Lord had received anticipatory fulfilment: "God is Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

God's Holiness Emphasised. There was no better way of teaching this to a people, to whom the idea was unaccustomed and obscure, than by placing barriers and impediments in the way of the ordinary crowd, and in selecting an elect representative, of an elect family, of an elect tribe, as alone worthy to approach; especially when even he was not permitted to draw nigh except after special ablutions and with costly sacrifices. Such careful prescriptions enhanced the solemnity of the approach and the awful holiness of the Almighty. That the veil might not be passed, save once in the year, and then by the High Priest only, at whose garment's hem the bells rang with

his every movement, assuring the awed hearers that his life was yet preserved, enhanced the sense of the wideness of the gulf which intervened between God and man.

The Dual Aspect of the National Ministries. In the providence of God, the Hebrew nation of old was summoned, like the Church to-day, to perform three ministries for men—to pray for them, to illumine them, and to feed the immortal hunger of the soul. These ministries were represented by the altar of incense, the seven-branched candlestick, and the table of shewbread. Had we met with these three emblems in the outer court, we should not have been surprised; but it is somewhat remarkable to find them in the Holy Place, with only a veil between them and the Shechinah, yet could the lesson be more clearly taught that whatever was done for the great world of men was deemed an acceptable service to the Almighty? True service to mankind is accepted by God as true service to Himself. Inasmuch as we do aught to one of the least, we do it to Him. It is impossible to serve God aright in His secret place, without at the same time ministering to the world; and when we would bless men by our poor efforts, there is the savour of sweet incense in the heart of our Heavenly Father, whether we are rewarded by human praise or not. There is a gauge in Heaven that registers the pressure of our service on Earth.

The Nature of Man. But (3) one of the profoundest aspects of the Tabernacle, as afterwards of the Temple, was its teaching as to *the nature of man*. There is good reason to think that Moses was led to embody in the Tabernacle structure some of those profound thoughts on the essential structure of the soul which have always occupied the noblest of our race. The common people were fed with symbols and parables, but the construction of the Pyramids, and the secrets conveyed to Initiates of the ancient mysteries, are evidence that among the ancients there were schools of spiritual philosophy, which profoundly influenced Egypt, Chaldea, and Greece.

The Interpretation of that Day. There are traces of Divinity schools, where devout students assembled to study the philosophy of God and man thousands of years before our era. It may be that there are more references in the early Hebrew Scriptures to these deep teachings than we ordinarily realise, and that the system of interpretation in vogue among Bible students some fifty years ago has more to warrant it than the materialised thought of Western civilisation is inclined to admit. That allegory of Sarah and Hagar,

to which Paul refers, may furnish a truer clue to the reading of Scripture than some moderns might be ready to admit.

The Anticipation of the Future. But even if Moses were not aware of this mystic analogy, he may have been led by the Divine Spirit to construct the Tabernacle on such a method as would set forth to coming generations profound truths; and thus take his position among those who searched what the Spirit of Christ, that was in them, did signify, and to whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, nor to their age, but unto ours, did they minister those things which have been now announced unto us by the Holy Spirit sent forth from Heaven (see Heb. ix. 8: "The Holy Spirit this signifying," obviously in the construction of the Tabernacle).

Man in Relation to God. The Tabernacle, as we have seen, consisted of three parts, of which the middle was the Holy Place, with the Holy of Holies on the one side and the outer court upon the other. The nature of man is also tripartite, the centre being the soul, which is the seat of our personality. There we have as furniture the will, the mind, imagination, reason, the emotions, memory and other indispensable faculties. But on the one side, the forward side, we have the Holy of Holies of the Spirit, while on the other we have the outer court of the body, which brings us into contact with the world around. Holy of Holies, Holy Place, and Outer-Court, yet one structure: Spirit, soul, and body, yet one individual.

Every one has the aptitude and capacity for God, but until regeneration introduces the light of the Shechinah, the shrine of the spirit is dark and empty; and the highest state of man, in that case, is what the Apostle calls *psychic*. The natural or psychic man of 1 Cor. ii. 14, is he whose soul is the supreme governing power of his nature, because as yet his spirit has not awoken to, or been illumined by the Divine Spirit. But when regeneration has supervened, the darkness is past, the true light shines. The light of the Shechinah, representing the presence of God, pours its flood of glorious life into the soul, and through the soul into the outer court of the body, which becomes, in turn, quickened and transfigured by the energy of the indwelling Spirit. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies, through His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Our Holy of Holies. When our Lord bade each of us enter into his closet and shut the door and pray, there may have been a

reference to that closet of our nature which may be described as the Holy of Holies within us. It is there that we may meet God, and that the Holy Spirit will bear witness with our spirit; and it is there that we learn true wisdom. Having therefore, brethren, boldness, in hours of silent meditation, to enter into the Holiest, by a new and living way, which Christ hath consecrated for us, let us draw near.

Old Things Passed Away. (4) *But neither Tabernacle nor Temple are needed now.* Time and change destroyed the one, the armies of Vespasian and Titus destroyed the other. The Moslem holds the sacred site, so that the Jew himself is unable to do more than wail beside the old walls, as he remembers Zion. The Church of the Living God, that according to the foreknowledge of the Father, redeemed by the blood of the Saviour, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, is God's habitation now; even as it is written: "Ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephes. ii. 19-22, R.V.).

XII

“INTO THE HOLIEST”

EXODUS xxvi. 31-37; HEBREWS x. 19-22

31. And thou shalt make a veil *of* blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made:

32. And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim *wood* overlaid with gold: their hooks *shall be of* gold, upon the four sockets of silver.

33. And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy *place* and the most holy.

34. And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy *place*.

35. And thou shalt set the table without the veil, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side.

36. And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, *of* blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework.

37. And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars *of* shittim *wood*, and overlay them with gold, *and* their hooks *shall be of* gold: and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them.

19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

21. And *having* an high priest over the house of God;

22. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

XII

“INTO THE HOLIEST”

EXODUS xxvi. 31–37; HEBREWS x. 19–22

The Veil. A richly embroidered Veil, of the same material and workmanship as the inner curtains, which composed the ceiling of the Tabernacle, hung between the Holy and the Most Holy Place. It was glowing all over with figures of cherubim, in blue and purple and scarlet on a white ground. Whether this veil divided the interior in exact halves, as some have supposed, comparing verse 33 with verse 6, or whether it divided it into one-third and two-thirds, as was the case in Solomon's Temple, is not material to the present purpose. It is sufficient for our purpose that there was a division made by this magnificent curtain, draped over four pillars covered with gold. Within was the Ark, with its mercy-seat. Immediately outside was the Altar of Incense; on the right, when approaching the curtain from the Court, was the shewbread table, and on the left the golden candlestick.

The High Priest's Privilege. The High Priest alone might enter that Most Holy Place, once a year, and not without blood, this signifying that the way into the Holiest was not revealed, while the first tabernacle was yet standing. The Christian soul has too often missed the significance of this *parable* (as it is called in Heb. ix. 9) by identifying the Most Holy Place with heaven, but a more careful consideration of the explanatory teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews proves that this is not the meaning which the Holy Spirit desired to signify. If, as this verse teaches, the way into the Holiest was not made manifest under the Mosaic Dispensation, it stands to reason that it is now made manifest, since Christ has come, a High Priest of the greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands—that is to say, not of this creation. And if it is not of this material creation, is it not clear that it is immaterial, and therefore spiritual? Besides which, in Heb. x. 19 the writer says, “Having

therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holy Place." The Greek word there, rendered "the Holy Place," is the same as is used in ix. 8, ix. 12, ix. 25, where it clearly stands for the Holy of Holies. In addition, the references to the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh establishes the same position, and when we are bidden to enter into the Holiest, we are in effect asked to take up absolutely and literally that position within the veil which was allotted to the High Priest only once a year.

The Veil and Christian Experience. This division between the two compartments of the Tabernacle suggests the difference that pertains in religious experience, as illustrated in the lives of the saints of Scripture. Moses was a religious man before he beheld the burning bush, but he surely passed within the veil when he stood with God on the mount. David was a religious man in the earlier stages of his life, but he was subject to much failure and one great sin; but the difference between those days and the serene period of his later life, to which Psalm xxiii. is attributable, is manifest. When John asked for fire to fall from heaven on the villages of the Samaritans, he was sojourning beyond the veil, but it was rent for him, and he stood face to face with the Shechinah, when he wrote his Epistles, or beheld the ever-living Christ in his Apocalypse. It may be that up to this moment some reader of these words has been content with the twilight instead of the perfect day, and to that soul rings out the challenge: "Having therefore, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has inaugurated for us, let us draw near." This is the argument of Hebrews ix. and x.

Life Within the Veil. I. Let us enumerate the characteristics of the life "within the veil." We must distinguish between the *variants* and the *constants* of that experience.

—**Its Variants.** *The variants are as follows: Emotion*, which, as its name indicates, is as variable as the surface of the ever-changeable ocean, beneath whose expanse pulsations of power, of greater or less force, are perpetually passing. We cannot command or trust our emotional life, which is affected by so many and conflicting causes. *The Pressure of Temptation*, which is fitful and uncertain, sometimes rushing on us with the force of a tornado, and again like a soft breeze. *Enjoyment in our religious exercises*, which is sometimes keen and ecstatic, and at other times languid and depressed. *Desire for the salvation of others and the coming of the Kingdom.* This also passes from the fire shut up in the bones, so that we are weary of

forbearing and cannot stay, to the heavy lethargy of the Enchanted Ground.

It is well for us all to write these down as variants, being affected by physical, psychic, and other causes, that are not directly spiritual; though before we acquiesce in any of them we should carefully examine our hearts, to see whether we are harbouring anything which is disturbing the natural course of religious experience, and either retarding or invalidating it.

—**Its Constants.** Having eliminated the variant, let us turn to the constant. What are the characteristics of life within the veil?

(1) *It is a life of Joyful Assurance.* Too often we are like persons walking through a woodland glade, and our paths are streaked with patches of sunshine; but this experience is one in which the soul knows, and knows that it knows. The First Epistle of John, which is the tableland of love, resounds from end to end with the accent of conviction. The High Priest stood face to face with the Light of Shechinah; but the souls for whom the veil is rent, say with the people of Sychar, "We believe, not because of any word that human lips have spoken, but because we have seen for ourselves, and know that this is the Christ of God." For such there are the riches of the full assurance of understanding, the full assurance of faith, and the full assurance of hope. They for whom the veil is gone are not disturbed by the criticism of documents or the clash of creeds. The darkness is past, the Sun of Righteousness shines clearly and directly upon them, with healing in His beams.

(2) *It is a life which apprehends the near Presence of God.* Of course God is ever equally near. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. There is no far and near, here or there, space or time, in the existence of the Eternal. But to human consciousness there are sensible differences in the proximity or remoteness of the Divine Presence. The Psalmist says, "Thou art near, O God"; and the Patriarch cries, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" When, however, the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and reveals them, our Sun no more goes down, neither does the moon withdraw itself, and the Lord becomes our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning are ended. We speak with Christ as a man speaks with his friend. Life is no longer a monologue, but a dialogue. We see one face, hear one voice, detect one presence, and know that He who sent us is with us; our Lord has not left us alone, because we are set on doing the things that please Him. "Whom have I in

heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee.”

Even When He Uses Discipline. There may be hours when, in our service for others, we are called to enter the glades of Gethsemane and to cry from our cross that we are forsaken. It may be needful even, sometimes, that God should place us under the shadow of His hand when He passes by. Plants cannot thrive in unbroken light, they require the alternation of sun and shadow. It is necessary that the Divine Face should be slightly veiled, for the same reason that Moses’ was; but even then there is a calm assurance of His presence which is almost equivalent to perfect vision. Bunyan places the Land of Beulah immediately before the river, and we hesitate to challenge any statement to which he has affixed his seal, but surely we need not wait for the afterglow, whilst the Heavens are full of sunlight!

(3) *It is a life of Victory.* In physical disease, the atmosphere may be sterilised so as to become aseptic. No microbe of disease can live or breed in it. And when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, the susceptibility of our nature to the appeal of passion is reduced to the smallest possible amount. The explosive material is too wet to catch the spark. When we live and walk in the Spirit we cannot fulfil the lust of the flesh. We know the force of the stream running past us, but our sails are so full of the divine gale, blowing in the contrary direction, that we are able to continue our course undaunted. Ours is no longer the experience of Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, but of Isaac, the son of the free. For we are conscious that we are to abide in the house for ever; we have received the Spirit of Adoption; we address God, even as Jesus did, as Abba, Father; we hear the Father say, “Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine”; and if a son, then an heir. Use your rights, for when you are living in the inner place, and in the power of the Eternal Spirit, the power of the flesh is broken. It has no longer an attraction, it is no more capable of exerting its thrall. If you live in the Spirit, you cannot fulfil the lusts of the flesh. You may sometimes hear its murmurings, as Moses and Aaron had to do, when they went into the camp, but they cannot entice the heart, which is fixed in God.

—**Its Strength and Joy.** Remember that glorious Psalm cviii. The Psalmist begins by saying, “O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises.” Evidently David was in the Most Holy

Place of religious experience; and he goes on to say, "Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the defence of mine head; Judah is my sceptre; Moab is my washpot; upon Edom will I cast my shoe; over Philistia will I shout." That is the proud challenge of the life which is hidden with Christ in God. Whilst it abides in the Truth, it is impregnable and all-conquering. No weapon that is formed against it shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against it in judgment is condemned.

(4) *It is a life of prevailing Prayer.* We realise that we are allowed as priests to stand beside the Great High Priest in the psychical intercession, and find ourselves caught up and swept along in His intercessions for those whom the Father hath given Him, and for such as are believing through their word. Far and wide our thoughts travel over the world, over the sheep which as yet are not of His fold; and as we pray, there is an accent of conviction and certainty in our prayers. We know that He hears, and we know that we have the petitions that we desire of Him. In the language of that fine portraiture of the results of acquaintance with God, given in Job xxii., we decree things, and they are established. We hear God saying: "Of things concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me." We experience the truth of our Lord's words that he who believes shall have "whatsoever he saith."

(5) *It is a life of abounding Love for Others.* Those who know that for them, at least, the veil is gone, that there is no condemnation, that there is a clear sky over them, and the everlasting arms beneath, look with a strange and beautiful love upon their fellows. They seek out their excellences rather than their defects. There is no longer a beam in the eye, making it intolerant of the motes in the eyes of others. "The chord of self has passed trembling out of sight." The soul is baptised into the conditions of all men. It no longer desires things for the sake of possession, but for use and service. It counts itself the servant and debtor of all for the sake of Christ. It travails in birth till Christ is formed in them. So strong is this love that ambition for worldly honour, praise, esteem, position, emolument, is swallowed up in one set purpose, that the Kingdom of God may come, and His will be done, as in heaven so on earth. For them, of whom it is said that no man said that aught of the things he possessed was his own, because they had all things common—it is clear that already the veil had been rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

The Cost of the Way. II. *This new and Living Way was dedicated for us at great Cost.* “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us . . . through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Heb. x. 19, 20, R.V.). It cost our Lord the emptying of His Holy Incarnation, His Cross and Passion, His blood and broken heart. The reason is hid with God, until we are able to receive it, in God’s own time and place. In the meanwhile we remember that God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, that He might condemn sin in the flesh.

The Calvary Scene. It was towards the late afternoon of the day when Jesus died. The midday darkness had passed, the sun was shining on the earth again, but the air was heavy, and the parching thirst of all men and living things was so acute as even to touch the hearts of the seasoned soldiers, and when the dying Lord said, “I thirst,” one of them fetched vinegar on a sponge. Shortly after that He said, “It is finished,” “Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit,” and gave back His soul to God.

The Veil Rent. There were simultaneously an earthquake and other signs in the world of Nature; but the most extraordinary event transpired in the Temple, where the evening sacrifice was being offered. At that hour, being the hour of prayer, one of the officiating priests was within the Holy Place, presenting incense at the altar of incense, which stood immediately before the veil. To his unutterable amazement and horror, it seemed as though two gigantic hands had seized that heavy veil, which was renewed every year, and were rending it from top to bottom, as you might rend tissue-paper. Immediately the whole of the inner sanctuary stood revealed. His eyes beheld the secret which was only unfolded to the High Priest once a year. At first it was absolutely inexplicable, but when afterwards it was discovered that the rending took place at the moment when Jesus of Nazareth was expiring, the connection between the two events was recognised, and the story was mentioned with awe from lip to lip, which probably accounts for the announcement made afterwards, that a great company of the priests became obedient to the faith (Acts vi. 7).

The Way Opened. We know little more than that. The rending of the Temple veil took place, not in our Lord’s early prime, when life presented itself in its most rosy hues, or when He sat teaching on the Mount of Beatitudes, or when He was commissioning the

Twelve, but when He was dying—when He was in the act of yielding Himself on the altar to bear away the sin of the world. It was in that supreme moment that the veil was rent, betokening, so far as an outward sign could do, that something had happened, that the veil was no longer needed, that the way to God was open, that the old covenant had passed never to return, and that henceforth the soul of man might enter without hesitancy and fear. Even though, like Aaron, you have failed egregiously and miserably, you are welcome to draw as near spiritually, as he did physically, unto that Presence where Angels bow low with reverence, or hide their faces whilst they cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth."

The Conditions of Realisation. III. *The Conditions on which this Life may be realised.* In general, it is necessary that we look on this position as the right, through grace, of everyone who is in living union with Christ. We are familiar with the natural rights which belong to us as members of the human family, such as the right to live, to be free, to have a share in the common gifts of the Creator, and to know the privileges and blessings of a home. We have no hesitation in claiming these, and entering upon their enjoyment. But the rights that belong to us as members of the divine family are equally assured. Amongst these may be reckoned justification, sanctification, glorification, a name and a place among the children, and the right to enter on all those privileges which Jesus won by His obedience unto death. "I appoint unto you," He said, "a Kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me."

Possibilities by Faith. Appropriate and enter upon, by faith, this life within the precincts of the Holiest, not because of any merit in yourselves, but because you are one with Jesus Christ. Where He is gone, we may go; where He stands, we may stand; we may enjoy in spiritual fellowship and communion that blessed nearness to God which is the portion of the redeemed. "Having a great Priest over the House of God, let us draw near." "*For we are become partakers with Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end*" (Heb. iii. 14, R.V.).

Where We have Failed. What wonderful words are these! Do they not show where we have failed? We have not asserted our rights, which He has purchased for us by His blood, by the rending of His flesh, and by the breaking of His heart. *Do not wait to evolve into this experience!* Claim it: appropriate it: take it by faith, and hold it stedfastly by the same. Accept it with boldness, and assert it

in fulness of faith, having your heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and your body washed with pure water. When you look down at your past failures, your unworthiness, your many sins, you may be tempted to renounce your position and return to the miserable experience of the wilderness with its graves of failure. Then look up, and understand what Jesus has done. He has dedicated the new and living way of holiness and consecration—will you not walk in it? He has secured for you this standing in grace and glory, will you not at least step up to it and occupy it? He has fought hard to bring you to this, why will you not accept, humbly and thankfully, what He has secured? You have no hesitation in entering upon houses which you did not build, possessions you have never earned, titles you have never won—if they come to you by inheritance or by will! Why do you hesitate to enter upon your inheritance in Christ? But since His death has occurred, those who are called are entitled to receive the promise of an eternal inheritance! (Heb. ix. 15, R.V.) Why, then, do you hesitate to avail yourself of your Father’s gift in Jesus? This is not humility, it is a sinful and ungrateful perversion of God’s loving intentions.

The New and Living Way. *In particular*, the steps by which this life may be practically realised are set forth in Heb. x., and are set down below. But, at the outset, it should be remembered that we are told that the entrance into the Holiest is *by a new and living way*. May we not put it thus?—that our Master has inaugurated for us a new way of living, which was fresh to the world of His time, and is as fresh to-day as ever. The dew has distilled on each spring morning since the beginning, but is as fresh still as it was when it lay on the face of unfallen creation. After all, it is not by dreaming, or thinking, or austerities, but by living on the divine plan, that we enter into and enjoy that better life, to which we are invited by the writer when he says, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way through the veil, that is to say, His flesh . . . *let us draw near*” (Heb. ix. 19–22, R.V.).

Draw Near! 1. *Regard your body as having been prepared for you.* On the earlier pages of Scripture, the Hebrews, like other peoples, presented the bodies of animals to God—the sheep, the ox, the goat. This is an earlier stage of consecration; but surely it is better to present these than the body of the first-born child. “Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of

my soul?" But as light grew from more to more, the Psalmist, speaking for the advance-guard of humanity, uttered the memorable sentence quoted here, and which in the first sense was true of the Psalmist himself, but had a deeper and Messianic significance: "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body didst Thou prepare for Me . . . I am come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 5-7, R.V.). Here a new conception emerges, and one which may include ourselves. Dare to believe that God Himself has fitted your soul and body, that He gave you the body as the implement of your life-work, and is prepared by His grace to supplement any of its deficiencies. He desires that you may present it to Himself as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable in His sight. The plan or programme of the steps in which you are to walk has also been planned. It is not for you to *carve* your way through the tangled jungle, but to walk in the steps which He has prepared. We were created unto good works, which He has before prepared that we should walk in them (Eph. ii. 10). Only let us see to it that our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water; and let it be never forgotten that the pure body is only possible to the pure soul that refuses to give room to anything less than the best and highest.

—**Resolving to do God's Will.** 2. *Determine that you will do the will of God.* There is a sense in which we may repeatedly affirm the words, which have been freshly minted by the Lord: "I am come to do Thy will, O God." If at first you cannot delight to do it, do it, knowing that it is essentially good, perfect, and acceptable. You will never know what marvellous results lie within the compass of very ordinary lives, until you are willing to be the channel and expression of the Eternal Will. The Will of God necessarily provides the rails on which the soul proceeds, when it is propelled by the Divine Spirit, fulfilling the Divine purpose. It may not be always possible to say, at the outset, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." We begin by the choosing it, advance to obeying it, and end by delighting in it. It is a good and memorable day in a man's life when he is content with this, no longer seeking applause, or craving the smile of man, not endeavouring to please or aggrandise self, but calmly, quietly, and persistently doing it on earth, even as it is done in heaven. How strange that we should so often pray for it to be done, but are so fearful and reluctant to do it ourselves!

—**Deeming the Sin-question Settled.** 3. *Reckon that the Sin-question has been dealt with, once and for ever.* "By one offering He hath perfected them that are being sanctified." We may often need to wash in the laver, and to be sprinkled from an evil conscience, but we have passed beyond the great brazen altar with its heavy toll of victims appointed for the Day of Atonement. Our great High Priest has offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, and has done it so completely and finally that instead of standing as the ancient priests did, He has sat down on the right hand of God, henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet (Heb. x. 12, 13, R.V.). And it is on this basis that the covenant is built, in which God says that He will remember our sins and iniquities no more (verse 17). Surely if He forgets our sins, and puts them behind His back, we may have boldness to enter into the Holiest, as though we have never sinned, but had shared from the first the unfallen glory of the first-born sons of light.

—**Participating in the Cross of Christ.** 4. *Through the power of the Eternal Spirit we must participate in the Cross of Christ.* It was by the Eternal Spirit that He offered Himself without spot to God (Heb. ix. 14); and it was at the moment of that offering, when the body of His flesh was being torn asunder, and His Spirit was passing into the spirit-world, that the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Similarly, when we identify ourselves with His cross, when we take personally and individually that position which He took up as our representative, when we are crucified with Christ, yielding to death our old and selfish nature, without mercy or pity, then the soul experiences that rending of the veil, in virtue of which the way into the Holiest experience becomes plain. After all, the whole question hinges on this! What are we willing to do? "If I live after the flesh, I must die; but if by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. viii. 13, R.V.). Then as we emerge from the tenacious hold of the flesh into the liberty of the sons of God, a great voice will be heard saying, *Unfold, Unfold*, and the blessed angels will make way for the soul, as it passes beyond their veiled presence to the secret place of the most High, to learn what it is to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, where there is a new heaven and a new earth, and the former things are passed away.

XIII

THE COURT AND ITS CONTENTS

EXODUS xxvii. 1-19; xxx. 17-21

1. And thou shalt make an altar *of shittim wood*, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof *shall be* three cubits.

2. And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass.

3. And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basons, and his flesh-hooks, and his fire-pans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make *of brass*.

4. And thou shalt make for it a grate *of network of brass*; and upon the net shalt thou make four brasen rings in the four corners thereof.

5. And thou shalt put it under the compass of the altar beneath, that the net may be even to the midst of the altar.

6. And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves *of shittim wood*, and overlay them with brass.

7. And the staves shall be put into the rings, and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, to bear it.

8. Hollow with boards shalt thou make it: as it was shewed thee in the mount, so shall they make *it*.

9. And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward *there shall be* hangings for the court *of fine twined linen* of an hundred cubits long for one side:

10. And the twenty pillars thereof and their twenty sockets *shall be of brass*; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets *shall be of silver*.

11. And likewise for the north side in length *there shall be* hangings of an hundred cubits long, and his twenty pillars and their twenty sockets *of brass*; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets *of silver*.

12. And *for the breadth of the court on the west side shall be* hangings of fifty cubits: their pillars ten, and their sockets ten.

13. And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward *shall be* fifty cubits.

14. The hangings of one side *of the gate shall be* fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three.

15. And on the other side *shall be* hangings fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three.

16. And for the gate of the court *shall be* an hanging of twenty cubits, *of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework: and their pillars shall be* four, and their sockets four.

17. All the pillars round about the court *shall be* filleted with silver; their hooks *shall be of silver*, and their sockets *of brass*.

18. The length of the court *shall be* an hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty everywhere, and the height five cubits *of* fine twined linen, and their sockets *of* brass.

19. All the vessels of the tabernacle in all the service thereof, and all the pins thereof, and all the pins of the court, *shall be of* brass.

17. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

18. Thou shalt also make a laver *of* brass, and his foot *also of* brass, to wash *withal*: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.

19. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat:

20. When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord:

21. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, *even* to him and to his seed throughout their generations.

(See xxxviii. 1-20 for the realisation of this pattern.)

XIII

THE COURT AND ITS CONTENTS

EXODUS xxvii. 1-19; xxx. 17-21

The Court. The court which enclosed the Tabernacle was an oblong, three hundred feet in length and seventy-five in breadth. It was enclosed by curtains hung on sixty pillars, placed at intervals of seven feet and a half. Each pillar stood in a bronze socket, inserted in the ground. They were connected by silver rods called fillets, fitted into sockets, sustaining the hangings of fine white linen. There was but one entrance on the East. The Holy of Holies was situated at the opposite end, towards the West, so that those who worshipped would have no temptation to prostrate themselves, after the manner of the heathen, towards the Sunrise. The curtains of the entrance were of the same material as that of the curtains over the entrance to the Tabernacle itself, and were of blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer (compare verse 16 with xxvi. 36).

Its Uses. The court preserved the Tabernacle from accidental or intentional profanation, and gave the priests a certain measure of privacy for the prosecution of their duties. Its presence was a perpetual reminder that man should pause and consider, before he rushes into the presence of the Most High. It seemed to say to every worshipper: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God. . . . Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth" (Eccles. v. 2, R.V.). All Israel, from the youngest to the oldest, of all classes, of both sexes, whether princes, priests, or people, were welcome to enter the Temple-court. Those who, like Hannah, were in sore trouble, might stand there and offer their prayers and vows. Those who claimed sanctuary, like Joab, might come to lay hold on the horns of the altar. All who desired to consecrate their offerings to the Lord or to meet with Him were welcomed, and the priests were in attendance to receive their gifts.

Its Furniture: the Altar. Two significant pieces of furniture had their position between the outer opening and the entrance to the Holy Place—the altar and the laver.

I. *The Altar.* Already it had been promised that an altar would be made to God in the place where He should record His name (xx. 24). This pledge was now redeemed. Probably the altar might be described as the altar-case, the bronze exterior being filled with earth, on which the victims were burnt, and which could be renewed from time to time. It was constructed of shittim wood covered with bronze. Brass and iron were almost unknown; but, like the Egyptians, the Hebrews used an amalgam of copper and tin. The shovels and pans were used to remove the ashes, the basins to receive the blood. The firepans, elsewhere translated censers, were probably employed in carrying the burning embers to the altar of incense. It is supposed that the grating and compass were part of the exterior of the altar, in which rings, etc., were inserted for its carriage. The horns were projections at the four top corners, like the horns of bulls. Victims were bound to them, blood was placed on them, and criminals clung to them.

The Altar and the Sacrifices. The position of the Altar just inside the entrance to the court made it as clear as symbology could that the beginning of fellowship between God and man must be in sacrifice. The sacrifice of sin-offerings indicated man's sinfulness. He had forfeited his life, which was returned to him because of the forfeiture of the life of the animal he brought. The sacrifice of whole Burnt-offerings suggested and made evident the soul's resolve to yield itself wholly and absolutely to the service of the Almighty. The sacrifice of Peace-offerings, a portion of which was burnt, whilst the worshipper partook of the remainder, indicated that there was a compact of Peace between the Almighty Friend of Israel and the individual or family that desired to enter into union with Him. It was as though that noble summons of Psalm l. 5, was specially applicable to the last-mentioned groups: "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."

The Better Sacrifice. That same Psalm, however, indicates that after several centuries had elapsed, a loftier conception of the Divine requirements began to prevail: "Hear, O My people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify unto thee. . . . I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. . . . If I

were hungry, I would not tell thee. . . . *Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High*" (Psalm 1. 7-14, R.V.).

The Shadow and the Substance. But though the spiritual conception of sacrifice became more accentuated, the offerings of the Levitical Code were continued until the overthrow of Jerusalem by Titus, and the Hebrew race has continued, "without sacrifices," ever since. They were but the shadow of good things to come, and, though offered year by year through long centuries, could never take away the sins of which they made remembrance continually. When, therefore, the perfect substance had come, the mere shadow, the imperfect, was done away, presumably by a divine decree. The Temple was no longer God's House. The Divine Tenant had left it. There was a special emphasis, therefore, in our Lord's words: "Behold *your* house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. xxiii. 38). "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second" (Heb. x. 9). "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor. xiii. 10).

The Enduring Fact Witnessed to. It should, however, be borne in mind that though the symbol, having fulfilled its purpose, has passed, the things symbolised remain. God is constantly instructing the mind of man by restatements of the old and eternal facts, which are indestructible because fundamental. The Altar represents the great fact of Calvary, when, through the Eternal Spirit, our great High Priest offered Himself without spot to God. The supreme act of Reconciliation, the Burnt-offering, and the Peace-offering were all present in His one oblation of Himself, once offered.

The Conscious Self-Offering of Christ. It should be understood, however, how clear is the distinction between the death of our Lord and the death of these sacrificial victims. They were absolutely unconscious of the religious value attached to their death. They were, so far as they were concerned, quite involuntary, and even refractory. They were offered to ransom the offerer, who made them an offering for his sin. But our Saviour's act was perfectly voluntary. He said: "I lay down My life of Myself. No man taketh it from Me. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it again." We may go further, and say with the Apostle that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." The Reconciliation, effected on the cross, was not the act of a third party stepping in to intercept a blow, which must otherwise fall on man from a justly offended God; but

of God Himself, who, in the person of Christ, took home to Himself the anguish, the sorrow, the suffering, which are the necessary concomitants of sin. We cannot understand the Philosophy, but we accept the fact, which has given peace to myriads, and we are familiar with many analogies to it in human life. How often, for instance, have parents borne the shame, sorrow, and suffering which their children's wrong-doing have entailed, and how heavily they have paid penalties which have left them bowed, broken, impoverished and disgraced

—**An Offering for Us.** But, in the death of the Cross, there was not only the spiritual counterpart of the great Day of Atonement in its Sin-offerings, but in its Burnt-offering and Sin-offerings also. There our Lord Jesus yielded Himself absolutely and utterly to the Father's will, and there He set up a Table, that of His Body and Blood, at which, as it has been elongated through the centuries, all the saints have sat. "This is My Body, broken for you": "This is the cup of the new covenant, shed for you. Drink ye all of it."

II. The Laver. No particulars are given as to the size or shape of this large bronze vase or basin, which stood between the altar and the holy place. It was evidently kept supplied with water, so as to provide whatever was needed for the various ceremonies. The Priests were also required to wash both their hands and feet on every occasion of their entering the sacred tent, and of their ministering at the altar. The significance of this ordinance was, therefore, extremely clear and simple. The necessity of daily cleansing on the part of those who are engaged even in the most holy service, and of all who would approach God, is so obvious as hardly to require comment. The body washed with pure water has for its counterpart the daily cleansing of the soul, without which no man may minister in the Divine presence.

The Water and the Cleansing Grace of Christ. But a new and tender beauty is given to this holy rite, when we read it in association with John xiii., where before the Feast of the Passover, and therefore before the Institution of the Holy Supper, the Lord rose from the supper, and laid aside His garments, girded Himself with a towel, and began to wash the disciples' feet. It might have been supposed that this was only a beautiful sign of His absolute humility, that though He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God and went to God, yet He was

prepared to assume the form and office of a servant, and perform the most menial duties for those He loved. But obviously more than this was implied, as we may gather from the words addressed to Peter, on his expressing his strong remonstrance; and Jesus said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me"; and again, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John xiii. 10, R.V.).

Our Need of Cleansing. We can easily understand the spiritual reference of these words. We have, so to speak, bathed our sinful souls in the cleansing grace of Christ. Perhaps this is what He signified when He spoke of the necessity of our being born of water and of the Spirit. It will be remembered, also, that the Apostle spoke of the washing or laver of Regeneration; but who is there of us that is not conscious of the daily soil of life? With us probably the hands amid the grime and dust of modern life demand much the same repeated washing as the sandalled feet of the Oriental. We cannot spend hours, or sometimes even minutes, without requiring soap and water for our hands. They are in constant requisition in the physician's or surgeon's rooms, and in addition the antiseptic carbolic, or its equivalent, is perpetually in evidence. But if this is the case physically, how much more spiritually! We can hardly engage in prolonged social intercourse, or negotiate our business career, or undertake religious duty, without sometimes a vague, and at other times an acute, sense that we have contracted defilement which requires to be confessed and put away. If we have not actually hurt others and injured our own conscience, we may not have been clear and strong enough in our declarations on behalf of the truth. We are told that when the days of festival in which his sons and daughters participated were finished, their father was accustomed to rise early in the morning, and offer burnt-offerings according to the number of them all, for Job said: "It may be that my sons have sinned, and blasphemed God in their hearts." And he had good reason for what he feared, as we all may have.

The Consciousness of Need. We must not have a hyper-sensitive or morbid conscientiousness, as though our Heavenly Father were lying in wait to catch at us at every turn; but we can always discriminate between this and any clear act of wrong, because in the former case there is only a hazy and vague uneasiness, which is often the reaction from nervous over-strain, whereas in the latter there is a clear and positive realisation of some one thing in which

we have failed. God is always definite in His dealings with conscience. When the soul is being dealt with by His Spirit, there is no beating around the bush. The sword of the Spirit cuts straight to the infected place. We have no alternative but to go back and pick up the thread of obedience just where we dropped it, in the belief that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. There is a wide difference between *sin* and *sins*. The former is the root and trunk of our selfishness or self-ness—the carnal and sensual nature which deflects us, as the metal of the ocean-steamer deflects the needle, whereas the latter are the commissions or omissions of our daily life.

Confession and Pardon. When we confess these failures to our Lord, we must believe in their absolute and immediate forgiveness. We should not wait for the hour of evening prayer, nor even to kneel in our secret place; but wherever we are, and whatever we may be doing, we should lift our hearts to Christ, and ask Him to perform for us the office He did for those men who gathered around Him in the upper chamber. We are told that He *began* to wash the disciples' feet; but I wean that He has never finished this blessed and beneficent office. He has continued through the centuries, and continues, and will not entrust the work to any angel or saint; it is His own prerogative.

The Inexhaustible Love of Christ. It may be asked—how often may we repair to Him with our request for His gracious interposition on our behalf? Will He not tire? How often may His priests wash in the Laver, or invoke His gentle ministry on their behalf? There is no limit to it—absolutely none. We have some hint of this in the introductory paragraph to the incident with which we are dealing: "Knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, *having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end*" (John xiii. 1, R.V.). Those final words do not, of course, mean "to the end of His mortal life," but, as the R.V. margin suggests, "to the uttermost" limit of infinite and Divine love.

—Unto Seventy-times Seven. But there is no limit. There is no horizon. There is no shore. We gather as much from those memorable words the answer to Peter's timid suggestion that it would be sufficient if he forgave his brother seven times. "*Seven times?*" said our Lord, nay, *Seventy times Seven.*" But this is the strongest

combination of perfection that numbers can supply. Here is ten, a perfect number, multiplied by seven, and seven again, the well-known symbol of perfection! What could be more convincing? And if our Saviour demands that man should forgive his brother so often, what may not we expect from Almighty God, who is love? My brother or sister, do not wait for hours to pass till you confess, do not even wait for the embers of your passion to get cold, do not wait till the hot tears of penitence begin to flow, but right there, lift your sorrowful heart to the Redeemer, though it be the millionth time, and He will forgive and restore as at the first. But be sure of this, that long before you reach the millionth time, you will have become so softened and tender, so believing and trustful, so full of the holy love which begets godly fear, that you will not sin as you have done aforetime, but His gentleness will have made you great.

XIV

THE PRIESTHOOD OF AARON AND HIS SONS

EXODUS xxviii

1. And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, *even* Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.

2. And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty.

3. And thou shalt speak unto all *that are* wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priests' office.

4. And these *are* the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.

5. And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen.

6. And they shall make the ephod *of* gold, *of* blue, and *of* purple, *of* scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work.

7. It shall have the two shoulder pieces thereof joined at the two edges thereof; and *so* it shall be joined together.

8. And the curious girdle of the ephod, which *is* upon it, shall be of the same, according to the work thereof; *even of* gold, *of* blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.

9. And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel:

10. Six of their names on one stone, and *the other* six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth.

11. With the work of an engraver in stone, *like* the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold.

12. And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod *for* stones of memorials unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial.

13. And thou shalt make ouches *of* gold;

14. And two chains *of* pure gold at the ends; *of* wreathen work shalt thou make them, and fasten the wreathen chains to the ouches.

15. And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; *of* gold, *of* blue, and *of* purple, and *of* scarlet, and *of* fine twined linen, shalt thou make it.

16. Foursquare it shall be *being* doubled; a span *shall be* the length thereof, and a span *shall be* the breadth thereof.

17. And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, *even* four rows of stones: *the first row shall be* a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: *this shall be* the first row.

18. And the second row *shall be* an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond.

19. And the third row a figure, an agate, and an amethyst.

20. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings.

21. And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, *like* the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes.

22. And thou shalt make upon the breastplate chains at the ends *of* wreathen work *of* pure gold.

23. And thou shalt make upon the breastplate two rings of gold, and shalt put the two rings on the two ends of the breast-plate.

24. And thou shalt put the two wreathen *chains* of gold in the two rings *which are* on the ends of the breastplate.

25. And *the other* two ends of the two wreathen *chains* thou shalt fasten in the two ouches, and put *them* on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod before it.

26. And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and thou shalt put them upon the two ends of the breastplate in the border thereof, *which is* in the side of the ephod inward.

27. And two *other* rings of gold thou shalt make, and shalt put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forepart thereof, over against the *other* coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod.

28. And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that *it* may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod.

29. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy *place*, for a memorial before the Lord continually.

30. And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually.

31. And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all *of* blue.

32. And there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an habergeon, that it be not rent.

33. And *beneath* upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates *of* blue, and *of* purple, and *of* scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about:

34. A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about.

35. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy *place* before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not.

36. And thou shalt make a plate *of* pure gold, and grave upon it, *like* the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

37. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be.

38. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.

39. And thou shalt embroider the coat of fine linen, and thou shalt make the mitre of fine linen, and thou shalt make the girdle of needlework.

40. And for Aaron's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty.

41. And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office.

42. And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach:

43. And they shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy *place*; that they bear not iniquity, and die: *it shall be* a statute for ever unto him and his seed after him.

XIV

THE PRIESTHOOD OF AARON AND HIS SONS

EXODUS xxviii

The Priesthood: The Human Impulse. The idea of a Priesthood is implicated with the consciousness of sin; and this in turn seems to be a necessary consequence of a moral nature that finds itself entangled in selfishness and sin, but carries within it an ideal of perfect goodness. Little children and young natures not yet habituated to the presence and practice of evil; primitive and simple folk who live in contact with Nature; with the brooding thunder-cloud, the snow-clad alp, the infinite solitude of vast spaces; they who from their birth carry with them, more than most, the music of the everlasting chime—these are specially susceptible to the immense chasm and gulf which separates us from the purity of the Eternal Holiness. Others are startled by the irruption of a whirlwind of passion, by repeated falls and failures, or by suddenly encountering the law of God, speaking from Sinai or Calvary.

Every race, therefore, conscious on the one hand of God's majesty and holiness, and on the other, of its own unworthiness, has selected one of its number to stand as mediator between Him and themselves, hearing His voice, and uttering for them things which they dared not say. The consciousness of the gulf between the purity of the highest heaven and the impurity in which men have been shapen has acted as an impelling force, that could devise no better expedient than to seek representation by the fittest of their race.

—**Felt by Moses.** This universal movement of the human heart was present with Moses when he spent those days of prolonged fellowship with the Divine Mind, during which the conception of the Priesthood, as set down in this chapter, was communicated and elaborated. We shall see that any deficiencies that might pertain to the nature of the selected priest were compensated for by the elaborate dress in which he was habited, the various items of his

vestments suggesting characteristics which were demanded by the ideal daysman, but were wanting in its human embodiment. They were holy garments, "for glory and for beauty."

Conditions of the Priesthood: The Office restricted to Hebrews. An Egyptian, Philistine, or Assyrian could not have understood or interpreted the peculiar genius of the Hebrew people. Their representative in the Divine Presence-chamber must be one in whom the Hebrew blood was flowing with no foreign admixture, and by whom the Hebrew ideal would be perfectly realised, with no alien ingredient.

—**To Holy Men.** It was necessary also that he should be a *holy man*. His purity was therefore set forth in the snowy whiteness of the inner garments (verses 42, 43); but, in order to make more clear and certain the holiness which must characterise him, they placed upon his brow a golden plate, on which the words "Holiness to the Lord" were engraved (verse 36 and following). It was as though they said: "We are conscious that our representative may fail in personal holiness, but on that golden plate of purest metal we have placed our ideal, the high-water mark, which we desire our priest should attain."

—**Mindful of God and of Man** They needed, also, a man who should be *habituated to the Heavenly Realm*. The High Priest was therefore clothed in a robe of blue (verses 31, etc.). Blue always speaks of depth, whether of the glacier fissure or of the ether above us, of the lake or ocean. Yet in his commerce with heaven they desired that he should not be unmindful of them, or of their concerns, or of the earth, and therefore all round the hem of the skirt were golden bells alternated with pomegranates, that might remind him of the listening ears of the people, and might assure them that he had not fallen into a swoon, or been stricken by the rays of the Shechinah, but was moving to and fro, intent on their service.

—**And Acting in a Representative Capacity.** But perhaps the most urgent of all needs was *that for direct and personal representation*. This was secured, even against any lapse of memory in himself, by the onyx stones of the ephod, and the precious stones in the breast-plate.

The Ephod. The *Ephod* was a kind of waistcoat, consisting of two pieces, one to cover the chest and the other the back, joined together above the shoulders and united at the waist by a band, called "the curious girdle of the ephod." This band was of one piece with the ephod, being woven on either to the front or the back part. It held

the other part in place, and was passed round the body and fastened by a clasp or strings. It should be noted that the materials of the ephod were the same as those used for the veil and curtains of the sanctuary (xxvi. 31 and 36), though the fabric may have been of a more delicate quality. The worshipper was thus kept in harmony with his surroundings. The gold was probably introduced by the needle, as gold-thread, after the fabric had been woven. On each of the shoulderpieces that united the back and front parts of the ephod was a socket of gold holding an onyx or, as most commentators agree, a sardonyx stone, which is an excellent stone for engraving. On these the names of the twelve tribes were cut, in order of their seniority. The presence of these stones on the High Priest's shoulders showed clearly that he entered the sanctuary in a representative capacity, bearing with him the interests, sins, and sorrows of the entire nation. He was there in the name of the whole community.

The Breastplate. This conception was still further emphasised by the *Breastplate*, which was attached to the ephod when it had been put on, and formed its principal ornament. It must have been the most striking and brilliant object in the whole attire of the High Priest. Externally, it repeated the symbolism of the ephod; but internally it fulfilled a still more important function, because it contained the Urim and Thummim, by which the decisions of their Almighty King and Friend were obtained for His suppliant people. Therefore it was called the breastplate of judgment, or decision (verses 29-30).

The breastplate was nine inches square, and was doubled, so as to form a bag in which the Urim and Thummim might be kept. On the exterior were the twelve precious stones in four rows of three each, and on these the names of the tribes were engraved. The breastplate had four rings, two at its two upper corners, and two just behind its two lower corners; a golden cord was to be passed through the upper rings, and attached to the sockets of the shoulder stones; whilst a blue lace or ribbon was passed through the two lower rings, and tied to two other rings set on the front of the ephod a little above the curious girdle (verses 26, 27). By these four fastenings at its four corners the breastplate was securely attached to the ephod.

Thus Aaron not only bore the names of the twelve tribes upon his shoulders but also upon his heart. The former indicated that he sustained them with his strength, the latter that he loved them with a tender compassion.

Office of the Breast-plate. Among the garments of the High Priest the breastplate was what the mercy-seat was amid the furniture of the sanctuary. The two shone with glory: in the case of the Shechinah it was the direct beam, and in the case of the breastplate, reflected. Whenever its wearer stood before the mercy-seat, the whole of the stones of his breastplate flashed with a glory and beauty that never shone on sea or shore.

Is it not probable that for several weeks before the great Day of Atonement, that the High Priest's tent would be besieged by men and women, some of whom might visit it under the shadow of night, each with some special sorrow, temptation, or confession, saying in effect: "You will not forget me, will you, upon that holy day, when you stand before God? I shall be outside offering my heart to Him, but you will be within His secret place. Do not forget me!" How much they needed a *compassionate* nature, that could be touched with the feeling of their infirmities and sorrows, and one who would be *faithful*, not dissipating on himself, or upon lesser concerns, those holy moments when he was face to face with God. In order to secure some certainty that they would be remembered they set their names on his person, so that the very stones would speak for them. "Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart . . . for a memorial before the Lord continually" (verse 29).

The Care in Using a Mediator. We have to think ourselves back into their position, for we have never had to deal with God through a human mediator. We have always been able to go directly into His presence with our idiosyncrasies, our sorrows, and our sins. But if we were obliged to approach Him through a daysman or mediator, how nervous we should be lest we should be overlooked or forgotten, or lest some part of our case would be omitted or misrepresented! These Hebrew people did their best to secure the right man as their representative, and endeavoured to supplement any defects in his character and capacity by the costly items of his dress and equipment.

The Failure of the Aaronic Line of Priests. *But, notwithstanding these elaborate efforts to make the priests of Aaronic line efficient, it failed in several particulars, which are enumerated in the Epistle to the Hebrews.* They were compassed with infirmity (Heb. vii. 28). They had to offer sacrifices day by day for their own sins, as well as for the sins of the people (vii. 27).

They *stood* day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which could never take away sins (x. 11).

They were appointed without an oath, and on the basis of a casual commandment (vii. 21).

They were not suffered to continue by reason of death (verse 23).

They were, therefore, necessarily many, and were always transmitting their priesthood to others (verse 23).

They represented a covenant and system which were destined to be superseded (verse 12).

Symptoms of the admitted unsatisfactoriness of the Aaronic priesthood were even on the inspired page. Long centuries after its establishment, they found expression in Psalm cx., where the coming of another Priest, one after the order of Melchizedek, was foretold. Now if perfection had been of the Levitical priesthood, what further need would there have been for another priest to arise, after the order of Melchizedek, and not reckoned after the order of Aaron? (Heb. vii. 11).

Melchidezek. We know little enough of this Canaanitish king, who shines for one brief moment out of the drifting mists of those far-away centuries, recognised by Abraham as God's priest, blessing the patriarch, and receiving tithes from him. He seems to have derived his priesthood from no long line of saintly predecessors. At least their names and genealogy are not recorded. His priesthood did not depend on his pedigree. No definite consecration by the imposition or investiture of human hands signalised his entrance on his office. So far as history records, he had no successors. He stands like a monolith on the sands of the past, the Priest-King of the ancient city of Salem, who blessed Abraham in the name of the Most High God.

Abraham's Attitude to Melchizedek. It was remarkable how absolutely Abraham recognised the sanctity and superiority of this remarkable personage, when he gave him tithes of all, for surely it is the greater who receives tithes and gives the blessing, and the less who receives the blessing and gives the tithes. And the significance of Abraham's act was not confined to himself. As the representative of the house of Israel, of which Levi was part, he recognised the superior claims of the Melchizedek type of priesthood over any line of priests that might spring from himself. In Abraham the Hebrew priesthood itself acknowledged the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek. Obviously then we shall make a profound

mistake in founding any rules or rites for ourselves, in this Christian age, on the order of Aaron's consecration, investiture, ministry, or mediation, all of which are necessarily inferior to that higher type of priesthood which was foreshadowed in Melchizedek and realised perfectly in Christ.

Christ Our Melchizedek. It is impossible for our religious life to realise its utmost ideal if we confine our view to the Aaronic type of priesthood, whether set forth in a line of earthly priests or as furnishing our sole and only conception of Christ. It is not enough for you to look on Christ as your Aaron. He is that, and more. He is your Melchizedek. It is witnessed of Him that He liveth. He is clothed with glory and honour. He works *in* us as well as *for* us. He communicates the powers of the world to come and of the eternal life. He not only delivers us from Egypt, as the Paschal Lamb, but leads us into Canaan, as the Captain of the Lord's host.

Our Lord's Priesthood All-sufficient. Must the priest be one in nature with those whom he represents? "*Since the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same*" (Heb. ii. 14, R.V.).

Must the priest be a holy man? "*Jesus was holy, harmless, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sin*" (Heb. vii. 26, 27, R.V.).

Must the priest be habituated to the heavenly realm? "*We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man*" (Heb. viii. 1, 2, R.V.).

Must the priest be compassionate for the sins and sorrows of those whom he represents? "*We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (Heb. iv. 15, R.V.).

Must the priest be adjudged as a faithful and trustworthy? "*It behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God*" (Heb. ii. 17, R.V.).

The priests of Aaron's line were compassed by infirmity; but *He* is the Son, perfected for evermore.

They had to offer sacrifices for themselves; but *He*, having been made perfect, became, unto all them that obey Him, the author of eternal salvation.

They stood in daily ministry, because the worshippers, notwithstanding their exact obedience to the Levitical ritual, never lost their consciousness of sins; but *He*, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down for ever on the right hand of God.

They indeed were made priests without an oath; but *He* with an oath, by Him that saith of Him—

“The Lord sware, and will not repent Himself,
Thou art a Priest for ever.”

They indeed were made priests many in number, because that by death they were hindered from continuing; but *He*, because He abideth for ever, hath an indissoluble and unchangeable Priesthood, that doth not pass to another.

Aaron transmitted his priesthood and garments to Eleazar, and Eleazar again to his son, in a long succession; but *He* hath been made Priest, not after the law of a casual commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

The Aaronic priesthood was changed because it belonged to a sanctuary of this world; but Christ having come a High Priest of the good things that were to come, through the greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.

Christ's Office Possible to Him Alone. No angel could present us perfectly—no seraph with his flaming splendour, no cherub in his tender love, but only He who was born of a woman, who was a child, a boy, a young man, and reached maturity through the natural stages of growth. He was hungry and thirsty, suffered physical weakness and weariness, passed through the experiences of the workman, the citizen, and the patriot. He knew what popularity and loneliness were. He knew what it was to be the centre of an enthusiastic crowd, and to be deserted amid the shadows of Gethsemane. There is no shadow of experience cast by events on the human heart of which Jesus was ignorant, though He was absolutely spotless and holy. *We* know evil by yielding to it, *He* by resisting it.

His Infinite Compassion. Christ is infinitely compassionate. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is the nerve-centre of the Universe; and, as one musical instrument will vibrate to another, so does the heart of Christ vibrate in unison with your

heart and mine. He is not only a merciful, but a faithful High Priest. He is true to His troth, true to the pledges He has made, true to the trust we repose in Him, true to the yearnings which He has called into existence. We can be sure that He will perfect that which concerneth us, because His mercy endureth for ever, and He will not forsake the work of His own hands. If we are faithless and unbelieving, He will be found faithful, because "He cannot deny Himself."

His Work for Us. May we not suppose that, when his eldest son was old enough, Aaron took him by the hand and led him through the outer court into the Holy Place, showing him the candlestick, the shewbread, and the incense-altar, whilst the boy listened awestruck to his explanations? Presently the father would lead him to the magnificent veil, and tell him that behind it the Shechinah shone, and say, "My son, when I am gone, you will stand here, and pull that veil aside, and pass within and see that burning glory." But is not that what our Lord has done for us? He is not only our Mediator, feeling for us, and mingling His prayers with ours, so far as possible; but He leads us into the Father's presence, saying, "I will not pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you." As the Apostle Peter puts it: "Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, *that He might bring us to God.*" It will always be true that our Lord's sacrificial and mediatorial work lies at the base, and underpins all our relations with God, but there is an experience for the believer in Him analogous to that through which John's disciples passed when we pass into a new and deeper knowledge of the Father. We have fellowship with the Father. "None knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal Him."

The Urim and Thummim. Within the breastplate, as we have seen, there was the Urim and Thummim, at which the High Priest inquired on behalf of the people. It has never been absolutely decided what these words represent; but an explanation has been given, which is commended by several considerations. There is some light thrown on the matter by the promise of the risen Saviour to give to eat of the hidden manna, and to give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knew but the recipient (Rev. ii. 17).

Seeking Guidance. Probably the folds of the breastplate contained a lustrous and resplendent diamond, on which the name of Jehovah was engraved, but this was only seen by the High-Priest. He only

even beheld it when he looked into the crystal depths for the divine answer to his earnest and reverent interrogations. "David knew that Saul devised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod. Then said David, O Lord, the God of Israel, Thy servant hath surely heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand?" "O Lord, the God of Israel, I beseech Thee, tell Thy servant. And the Lord said, He will come down" (1 Sam. xxiii. 9-11, R.V.). It is not difficult to imagine that in the case of an affirmative, the diamond would flash with *Yes*, or, in the case of a negative, dim with *No*.

A Modern Parallel. Is there not a correlative of this in the experience of the child of God? In union with the Saviour, he also knows the flashing of the divine encouragement, and the dimming of the divine withholdings. There is an inner consciousness of the way and will of God, which is certain and irrevocable. When once the ear is accustomed to it, it is the constant and sure guide of the steps; and they thus become ordered by the Lord.

The Priesthood of Our Lord. Let us make much of the Priesthood of our Lord. When conscious of the least stain on our conscience and heart, let us apply to Him at once for cleansing and purity. When we are oppressed with our ignorance and weakness, let us make Him our confidant. When we are desiring some great gift and blessing, not for ourselves so much as for others, let us believe that He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near to God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. When our emotional life is at a low ebb, and we have lost the old glow and passion, let us realise that our acceptance with God depends, not on our frames and feelings, but on Him who stands in the Holiest. Our experience is one thing, our standing quite another. We have access by faith into the grace wherein we stand. We are already presented before God in the Person of our Great High Priest. Our names are already known, and our persons accepted. It is not a question of our appreciation of a fact that makes a fact true. The fact is true, even if we fail to derive much help from it: and the fact is, that "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

THE CONSECRATION AND DAILY DUTY OF AARON AND HIS SONS

EXODUS xxix; xxx. 22-33

1. And this *is* the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office: Take one young bullock, and two rams without blemish,

2. And unleavened bread, and cakes unleavened tempered with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with oil: *of* wheaten flour shalt thou make them.

3. And thou shalt put them into one basket, and bring them in the basket, with the bullock and the two rams.

4. And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water.

5. And thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod:

6. And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre.

7. Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour *it* upon his head, and anoint him.

8. And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them.

9. And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them: and the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons.

10. And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock.

11. And thou shalt kill the bullock before the Lord, *by* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

12. And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put *it* upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar.

13. And thou shalt take all the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul *that is* above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that *is* upon them, and burn *them* upon the altar.

14. But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: *it is* a sin offering.

15. Thou shalt also take one ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram.

16. And thou shalt slay the ram, and thou shalt take his blood, and sprinkle *it* round about upon the altar.

17. And thou shalt cut the ram in pieces, and wash the inwards of him, and his legs, and put *them* unto his pieces, and unto his head.

18. And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: *it is* a burnt offering unto the Lord: *it is* a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

19. And thou shalt take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram.

20. Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put *it* upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about.

21. And thou shalt take of the blood that *is* upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle *it* upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him.

22. Also thou shalt take of the ram the fat and the rump, and the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul *above* the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that *is* upon them, and the right shoulder; for *it is* a ram of consecration.

23. And one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer out of the basket of the unleavened bread that *is* before the Lord:

24. And thou shalt put all in the hands of Aaron, and in the hands of his sons; and shalt wave them *for* a wave offering before the Lord.

25. And thou shalt receive them of their hands, and burn *them* upon the altar for a burnt offering, for a sweet savour before the Lord: *it is* an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

26. And thou shalt take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration, and wave it *for* a wave offering before the Lord: and it shall be thy part.

27. And thou shalt sanctify the breast of the wave offering, and the shoulder of the heave offering, which is waved, and which is heaved up, of the ram of the consecration, *even of that* which *is* for Aaron, and of *that* which is for his sons:

28. And it shall be Aaron's and his sons' by a statute for ever from the children of Israel: for *it is* an heave offering: and it shall be an heave offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifice of their peace offerings, *even* their heave offering unto the Lord.

29. And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons' after him, to be anointed therein, and to be consecrated in them.

30. *And* that son that is priest in his stead shall put them on seven days, when he cometh into the tabernacle of the congregation to minister in the holy place.

31. And thou shalt take the ram of the consecration, and seeth his flesh in the holy place.

32. And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that *is* in the basket, *by* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

33. And they shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate *and* to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not eat *thereof*, because they *are* holy.

34. And if ought of the flesh of the consecrations, or of the bread, remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the remainder with fire: it shall not be eaten, because *it is* holy.

35. And thus shalt thou do unto Aaron, and to his sons, according to all *things* which I have commanded thee: seven days shalt thou consecrate them.

36. And thou shalt offer every day a bullock *for* a sin offering for atonement:

and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it.

37. Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.

38. Now this *is that* which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually.

39. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even:

40. And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering.

41. And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

42. *This shall be* a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee.

43. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and *the tabernacle* shall be sanctified by my glory.

44. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office.

45. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.

46. And they shall know that I *am* the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I *am* the Lord their God.

22. Moreover the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

23. Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred *shekels*, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, *even* two hundred and fifty *shekels*, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty *shekels*,

24. And of cassia five hundred *shekels*, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of oil olive an hin:

25. And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil.

26. And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony,

27. And the table and all his vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels, and the altar of incense,

28. And the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, and the laver and his foot.

29. And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy.

30. And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that *they* may minister unto me in the priest's office.

31. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be an holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations.

32. Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured; neither shall ye make *any other* like it, after the composition of it: it *is* holy, and it shall be holy unto you.

33. Whosoever compoundeth *any* like it, or whosoever putteth *any* of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people.

(See xxxix. 1-31 for the realisation of this pattern.)

THE CONSECRATION AND DAILY DUTY OF AARON AND HIS SONS

EXODUS xxix; xxx. 22-33

The Aaronic Priesthood. Aaron's investiture for the High Priestly office presents many points of interest, because principles are foreshadowed which received their profoundest recognition when our Lord on Calvary yielded His Spirit to the Father. But as a whole his priesthood assumes a secondary position in our regard, because though it came later in the development of the Hebrew people, it did not typify the essential work of our Lord, as Melchizedek's did. Aaron's priesthood was symbolical of Christ's, when on the cross He became the Propitiation for the sins of the whole world, but Melchizedek's is the symbol of that which He exercises for ever. Indeed, when we learn that Melchizedek was made like the Son of God, we begin to think that the elements of the Melchizedek-priesthood have ever resided in our Lord, and that He has always been a Priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. vii. 17).

The Melchizedek Priesthood. The Melchizedek order is superior to the Aaronic in several respects: and Abraham is quoted as having practically acknowledged this, when he gave him tithes of all, and received his blessing: "without any dispute the less is blessed of the better" (Heb. vii. 4-9, R.V.).

—**Contrasts.** 1. The Aaronic priesthood was made after the law of a casual commandment, whereas Melchizedek was priest after the power of an indissoluble life. It is witnessed of him, "Thou art a priest for ever" (vii. 11-19).

2. The Aaronic priesthood was constituted and continued without an oath; but in the case of Melchizedek, the Psalmist said (Ps. cx. 4) that the Lord *sware* and would not repent Himself, "Thou art a priest for ever" (vii. 20, 21).

3. In the Aaronic priesthood there was a constant succession of priests, because they were not permitted to continue by reason of

death; whereas Jesus, because He abideth for ever, hath His Priesthood unchangeable. It is inviolable by Time or Change, and partakes of the Timelessness of eternity (vii. 22, 25).

4. The priests of Aaron's line were obliged to offer sacrifices, first for their own sins, before they offered for those of the people; but the Priest who is after the order of Melchizedek had no need for this, for He had no infirmity, being the Son, who is perfected for evermore (vii. 26-28).

5. The Aaronic priests were perpetually engaged with death, with sacrificial offerings of blood, with a system of reconciliation and atonement, that was interminable, because the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins or perfect the conscience of the worshippers; but our Lord has once and for ever finished His work of reconciliation. "He offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, and sat down on the right hand of the throne of God." Aaron's Priesthood typified our Lord's Priesthood up to His Death on the cross; but the Melchizedek priesthood passes far beyond into the glorious Life and Ministry, the prayer and intercession of Him who liveth, and was dead, who is alive for evermore, and has the keys of Hades and of Death.

The Consecration Ceremony. For these reasons, the High Priesthood of Aaron, as we have said, assumes a secondary importance, because, typically, it has been superseded by Melchizedek's. But still, that which was given in pattern on the Mount must contain thoughts from God which we do well to ponder; the more so, because we are taught that there is a sacred oneness between our Lord and ourselves. "Both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of One." We can never forget that all believers have been summoned to be a royal priesthood and a holy nation. Of us it has been said, on the highest authority, that we were loosed from our sins, that we might become priests unto God. Therefore let us draw nigh, and take this Scripture to our comfort and edification.

There were four distinct stages in the solemn ceremonial.

(1) *Ablution*. "Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring to the door of the Tabernacle, and thou shalt wash them with water." Those who are approaching God on the behalf of a man, or man on the part of God, must be pure in heart and life! "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." We recall those sublime words addressed originally to Levi, and expressive of the highest type of priestly service: "My Covenant with him was of life and peace; and I gave

them to him that he might fear, and he feared Me, and stood in awe of My name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and did turn many away from iniquity" (Mal. ii. 5, 6, R.V.). Such was the divine ideal, and Malachi remonstrated with the priests of his time for their disastrous decline from this high standard, and summoned them once more to approximate to its measure.

(2) *Investiture*. "Thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron and his sons," etc. (verses 5-9). Leviticus viii. 7-9 gives a fuller enumeration. The holy crown indicated the royal rank of the High Priest, who combined the royal and sacerdotal functions, and was therefore a complete type of our Lord. "Behold," said Zechariah, "the man whose name is the Branch; . . . and He shall build the Temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; . . . and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. vi. 12, 13, R.V.). There should be a royalty about our personal priesthood also. No assumption of sanctity, and yet a sense like that which Nehemiah evidently entertained when he said, so finely, "I am doing a great work, I can not come down!" We are called to be a *royal* priesthood; and we are to be *kings*, as well as priests, unto God. Let us put away therefore all that is unseemly and frivolous, and walk worthy of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us bear ourselves, as Zebah and Zalmunna confessed that Gideon's brethren bore themselves. "Each one of them was as thou art, the children of a King."

When we are informed that Moses was bidden to *consecrate* Aaron and his sons, the literal rendering of the words would be: "Thou shalt fill the hand of Aaron and the hands of his sons." Some sign of the office to be fulfilled was generally placed on the open palm of the official being installed; and, in the present instance, we learn from verse 24, that certain portions of the offerings were placed there. The Church of Christ must approach the world with her hands filled. When the world sees us eager to participate in its pleasures, it forms its own conclusions: or when it sees us sad and morose, it is led to the same conclusions—that the love and joy of Christ do not content or fill the heart. We must teach them that we do not want to run with them to the same excess of riot, because our hearts are enriched to all satisfaction and to all generosity. Men must see evidence in us that Christ can fill the poorest lot so full with His

presence, that having all sufficiency in all things, all His people may abound unto every good work.

(3) *The Anointing*. "Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him" (verse 7). This oil was extremely rich and costly, and particular directions were given for its preparation. Pure myrrh, sweet cinnamon, which was probably imported by the commerce of that day from Sumatra or China; sweet calamus, the product of Mesopotamia or India; cassia, of which the native habitat was Java or the Malay Peninsula—were the principal ingredients. These required to be prepared with a considerable amount of scientific knowledge, which was possessed in an eminent degree by Bezaleel (xxx. 3; xxxvii. 29). But the combination of so many sweetly scented spices must have produced a delightful fragrance. The Orientals take an especial pleasure in delicious scents poured on the sultry air, or wafted on the gentle breeze. "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?" This sacred oil was restricted in its use to the anointing of the priests and for service within the holy precincts. It might not be manufactured and employed generally. It was, therefore, with a peculiar unction of special significance that, first, the Tabernacle, and then the High Priest, was dedicated to God's service (see Lev. viii. 10–12).

Our Unction. We, also, as the holy Apostle reminds us, have had and may have "the Unction of the Holy One," who, in this connection, can be no other than our Lord. He is the Christ—the Anointed; and He sheds the sacred chrism. His anointing took place specially at the commencement of His public ministry. He sheds the same oil of joy and grace on our heads, as one by one we yield ourselves absolutely to His service. We recall His ascent on high, and how He led captivity captive and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious; and of these gifts the most conspicuous was that of the Holy Spirit. "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth *this*." He had His Pentecost at the waters of the Jordan, and we have our Baptism in Fire. Of Him it is said, that in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and of that fulness all we have received, or may receive; for He giveth the Spirit without measure to all penitent and believing souls. It must be remembered, however, that "on the flesh" of the ordinary man that holy unction cannot be poured. We must crucify

the flesh with its affections and lusts, must give it no quarter, must treat it with absolute ignominy and contempt; and then on plans that God has made, with words that He has taught, and in strength which He has imparted, we shall go forth with the world of men as they who have a mission from the Eternal. "Let them place a holy mitre on his head," said one, when interceding for a strangely dishevelled priest; and what could we wish better for each other than that each child of God, called to any ministry whatever, might be anointed with the sevenfold gift and grace of the Holy Spirit?

(4) *The Sacrifice*. "And thou shalt bring the bullock," etc. (vers. 10, etc.). Aaron and his sons stood together with their hands upon *the bullock's* head, as though to transfer their sins. Its blood was smeared on the horns of the altar, and poured at its base. Part of the entrails were burnt on the altar, and the remainder of the carcase burnt outside the camp, since it was a sin-offering, and therefore unclean (Lev. iv. 11, 12). Next, they identified themselves with *the ram*, which was designated as a burnt-offering, and therefore typical of their desire to be entirely surrendered to the service of God. It was burnt whole upon the altar; and as they stood there, they would have desired nothing so much as that they might be living sacrifices unto God consumed by the fire of a divine love; but, alas, two of them were destined to be destroyed suddenly and awfully. *The other ram* was known as "the ram of consecration" (verse 22).

The Blood. Its blood, when it had been killed, was used after a unique fashion, being placed on the right ears and thumbs and toes of Aaron and his sons. It was as though, says one, the life of the victim they had offered was given back to reward them for the discharge of their sacred duties. Whatever we give to God, He returns to us with interest. But there is more than this thought here. The blood was the ransom-price, the purchase-money; and its application to ear, and thumb, and toe meant that these had been redeemed from common and unworthy purposes to be used only in the service of God. Oh that each of us would regard the several members and senses of our mortal body as being redeemed from all evil, and purified by our Lord for His peculiar use!

The Blood Sprinkled. The garments of Aaron and his sons were next sprinkled with blood and oil. Portions of the offerings, which, though now burnt in the fire, were afterwards to be reserved for their use, were placed by Moses on their hands, and afterwards

waved by him towards the four corners of the heavens, to indicate that though reserved for the servants, they were essentially God's own. A sacrificial feast followed, and crowned the proceedings of the day (verse 32).

A brief digression ensues at this point (verses 29, 30), enacting that the whole garments made for Aaron were to be preserved after his death, and used at the consecration of successive priests, who were to wear them for seven days after their investiture.

A Protracted Ceremony. The ceremony which we have thus briefly described was repeated on seven succeeding days, and must have produced a profound impression. To our refined taste, there may seem a large amount of what is inconsistent with the worship of the Father of our Lord; but may we not rather magnify the patience which was willing through such carnal ordinances to educate the Hebrew race to be the teachers of the sublimest spiritual religion that the world has ever seen! Of course it became ultimately a lifeless and spiritless ritual, against which Isaiah and the Prophets fulminated their strongest denunciations; but it was needful to begin where the people stood, and to lead them out gradually from the abominable sacrifices of the nations around them. These often included children—"the first-born of the body for the sin of the soul." When we were children we thought and acted as children do, but having become mature, we have put away childish things. Let us then not depreciate God's training of the child races. "When Israel was a child."

Habits of Devotion. No religious life can long exist, or at least thrive, without regular hours and habits of devotion, which these diurnal offerings suggest. Morning and evening prayers have been the habit of all ages. With the one we go forth to our labour till the evening, asking that our Father will give us His God-speed and guidance and protection. With the other we entreat forgiveness and mercy. "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." Pious Jews added a third opportunity, and prayed at noon (see Ps. lv. 17; Daniel vi. 10). Without doubt it is good to follow their example here, where possible; but for most it is not possible. Yet we all may repeat the holy strain of which Keble sings, while, with busy feet, we tread the world's highways.

Peter and John went up to the Temple at the hour of prayer, and we must never forget the frequency and constancy with which our

Lord maintained His attendance on the sacred rites of His people, though conscious of their liability to pass away. A great example surely to us all to maintain the sacred institutions of religion, both in our own households and in the outward ordinances of God's worship.

Precious Promises. The chapter ends with many great and precious promises. Jehovah promised to meet His people at the door of the Tabernacle, and speak with them; that He would sanctify both it and the priesthood with the glory of the Shechinah; that He would dwell among His people and be their God. How happy they would have been, had they but remained faithful to the Covenant: then had their peace been as a river and their righteousness as the waves of the sea, and their enemies would have submitted themselves unto them!

XVI

THE GOLDEN ALTAR OF PERPETUAL INCENSE

EXODUS xxx. 1-10; 34-38

1. And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: *of shittim wood shalt thou make it.*

2. A cubit *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; four-square shall it be: and two cubits *shall be* the height thereof: the horns thereof *shall be* of the same.

3. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about.

4. And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make *it*; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal.

5. And thou shalt make the staves *of shittim wood*, and overlay them with gold.

6. And thou shalt put it before the veil that *is* by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that *is* over the testimony, where I will meet with thee.

7. And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.

8. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.

9. Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.

10. And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: *it is* most holy unto the Lord.

34. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; *these* sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like *weight*:

35. And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure *and* holy.

36. And thou shalt beat *some* of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy.

37. And *as for* the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the Lord.

38. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.

(See also xxxvii. 25-29 for the realisation of this pattern.)

XVI

THE GOLDEN ALTAR OF PERPETUAL INCENSE

EXODUS xxx. 1-10; 34-38

The Altar of Incense. The natural place for a description of the Altar of Incense would seem to have been in ch. xxv., where we have the description of the Ark, the Mercy-Seat, the Table of Shewbread, and the Candlestick. And no sufficient reason has been given for its insertion here. There can be little doubt, however, that in its intrinsic importance, as well as in its proximity to the veil, it was one of the most sacred pieces of the furniture of the Holy Place. Though there is some ambiguity here as to whether it stood within or without the veil, there is none in xl. 21-29, where it is distinctly classed with the golden candlestick and the table of shewbread, as belonging to the Holy Place.

Its Structure. The golden altar was of small dimensions, being a cubit in length, a cubit in breadth, and two cubits high. It was therefore 21 inches in length and breadth, and 3 feet 6 inches high. A crown or raised moulding of gold ran round the top; and, like the Altar of Burnt-offering, it had four horns, one at each corner. Below the golden crown were the golden rings, through which the staves of shittim wood, overlaid with gold, were placed for carriage when the camp moved to another site. On the march, like the other pieces of furniture, the Incense Altar was covered with a blue cloth, and then with a covering of badger-skin (Num. iv. 11).

Its Offering: Incense. Unlike the brazen altar, no burnt-offerings, meal-offerings, or drink-offerings were presented at this golden altar, only incense, which not in the Tabernacle and Temple only, but in all religions, has been offered as the symbol of prayer. "Let my prayer be set forth as incense before Thee; the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. cxli. 2, R.V.). Most minute and special were the instructions given to Moses, and issued to the priests, concerning the composition of the incense to be offered.

The ingredients, as we learn from the closing paragraph of this chapter, were of a rare and precious quality, were beaten very small, and mixed in equal proportions and it was strictly prohibited that it should be used for any other purpose, or by any private individual.

Two Ceremonial Uses of Incense. There were two services in the Jewish ritual when incense was specially employed. On the great Day of Atonement, the High Priest, divested of his splendid robes, and clothed in simple linen, filled his censer with coals from the brazen altar, and passed into the inner sanctuary. Taking a handful of fragrant incense, he cast it on the living embers, and the Most Holy Place was at once filled with a dense cloud of aromatic fragrance. Such an emblem found its fulfilment in Christ's appearance for us in the Father's presence, where, clad in the simple attire of our Humanity, He ever liveth to make intercession. "For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us" (Heb. ix. 24, R.V.).

The second service in which incense was employed was in the ordinary daily service of the sanctuary. We are told that it fell by lot to Zacharias, according to the customs of the priest's office, to burn incense, while the people stood without, at the hour of prayer—"the whole multitude of the people were praying without" (Luke i. 10). The cloud of incense arose each morning when the priest extinguished the lamps of the seven-branched candlestick, and again in the late afternoon when he kindled them.

The Prayers of the Saints. In Rev. viii. 3, 4, R.V., the veil is lifted by the hand of the Beloved Seer, and we are allowed to behold the Angel—who surely can be no other than Christ, the Angel of the Covenant—standing beside the golden altar in heaven, and adding much incense to the prayers of *all* the saints: "And the smoke of the incense, *with* the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand." There is, therefore, not one saint, however sinful, so unworthy, so weak and feeble, who may not claim, that, as the spiral column of his prayer rises towards the Eternal Majesty of God, there shall not be added to it the much incense, merit, and power of the Saviour's intercessions. It is that addition to our prayers which makes them acceptable and prevalent, so that we may obtain the petitions that we have desired of God.

The Catholicity of Prayer. *One* golden altar for the prayers of *all* the saints. Open any book of private devotion containing

specimens culled from all ages and sections of the Church, and they all breathe the same spirit, and are adapted for private use amid the altered conditions of our modern life. The saints of the Greek, the Roman Catholic, and the Anglican Churches, the saints of every sect and denomination and of no Church at all, have contributed to the great book of common prayer, whose pages are being turned by all the world. However divided in all beside, we are one when we come to praise, adoration, and intercession. "The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee"; and lifts up holy hands to Thee, breathing forth similar petitions in similar phraseology.

Its Volume. But what a wealth of prayer has passed through the Mediator, as comprehended in that phrase "the prayers of all the saints." Students have often lamented the loss of the great libraries of the world. They have regretted the stupidity of the monks in respect to their palimpsests, involving the destruction of so many precious manuscripts. We have often wondered what treasures might not have been ours had the Alexandrian library never been consumed. What a wastage there has been of records and remains committed to various kinds of writing! But the loss to mankind through the destruction of ancient literature is small, compared with the loss suffered through our inability to preserve the prayers of the Church.¹ If only prayers could assume visible shape and form and be embodied in the celestial clothing of angels, what troops of bright and glorious messengers would have thronged the shining rungs of the ladder that Jacob saw connecting earth and heaven! The steps of the Temple of Prayer would have become worn and hollowed by their tread, although each should leave an almost imperceptible impression!

The Apostles' Prayers. We think of *the prayers of the glorious company of the Apostles*—of the prayers of Peter in his prison before he fell asleep, of the prayers of John as he poured forth his heart for the seven Churches of Asia from the lone isle of Patmos, of the prayers of Paul to which he makes so many allusions, and of which we have a handful of glorious specimens, and of the prayers of the other obscurer Apostles, of whom such slender records have come to us.

The Prayers of Prophets in all Time. We add to these *the intercessions and petitions of the goodly fellowship of the Prophets*, dating

¹ Suggested by some words of Henry Ward Beecher.

back through the Old Testament dispensation, of Moses on the Mount, of Samuel for the Ark, of Elijah for Israel, of Elisha for the recurring human needs that gathered around his daily path, of Isaiah and Ezekiel, of Daniel and Nehemiah, of John the Baptist, of Savonarola, of Luther, of Huss, of Knox, of Baxter, of John Howe, and of thousands more, through whom the Spirit of Prayer found vent as from deep abysses. One of the greatest pieces of prayer on record is that, for instance, in which Martin Luther poured forth his mighty soul in prayer on the eve of his appearance before the Papal Legate.

The Prayers of Martyrs. We add to these, the pleadings of the Noble Army of Martyrs, of Latimer and Cranmer, of Rutherford and Alleine, of the tortured boys of Uganda, and the mangled victims of the Boxer riots. From dens and caves of the earth, from the moor of the Covenanters and the Alpine Valley of the Piedmontese, from galleys under the lash, from the dark dungeons of the Inquisition, from the invaded homes of the Huguenots, from block, scaffold, and stake, prayers have ascended from lips in mortal agony, which must have been extraordinarily precious to Him for whom they were to be prematurely sealed in death.

The Prayers of the Church. To these we add the liturgies and litanies, the supplications and intercessions of *the Holy Church throughout all the world*. What a wealth of prayer arises as morning—and especially the morning light of the Lord's Day—moves noiselessly over the face of the globe! From one continent after another arises the voice of praise and prayer, led by priest and presbyter, uttered from the printed page or the exuberance of free speech, mingled with the tears of penitence or glistening with the glow of assured hope. "And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints" (Rev. v. 8, R.V.). It is as though the prayers of saints, like the perfume of a continent of flowers, mingling with the holy perfume of the much merit of the Redeemer, fills heaven itself with ambrosial fragrance.

The Prayers of All Saints. What a phrase this is—the prayers of *all* saints! The prayers of men like Dr. Johnson, who thought that his prayers were never answered. The strong prayers of men who take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence, the tremulous prayers of frail women, and the lisps of little children! Prayers offered

amid the damask splendour of royal palaces, and in poor houses, asylums, and hospitals, amid symptoms of poverty and want! Prayers offered amid worshipping throngs, where the telepathy of kindred hearts makes it easy, the prayers of lonely persons, who keep vigil in sick chambers, or sail amid the godless crews on ocean steamers, or live on the edge of civilisation, the advanced outposts of the great human army moving slowly forward to occupation. Then think of your prayers and mine, though indeed we are not worthy to be called saints, as mingling their tiny contribution, a flower to the parterres of spring, a drop in the tidal river, an atom in the pervasive perfume of the far spaces of the many mansions. Can it be that God counts them fragrant! In any case Christ mingles with them His intercessions. It is this that makes them permanent and prevalent. Only let us see to it that they are such that He can accept, that they are offered in His name, *i.e.* are consonant with His character, baptised with His Spirit, and steeped in His love!

The Hour of Prayer. In the morning, when Aaron extinguished, and again in the evening when he lit the lamps, he cast incense upon the glowing coals. The pious Jews prayed three times in the twenty-four hours. "Evening and morning, and at noonday, will I complain and moan; and He shall hear my voice" (Ps. lv. 17, R.V.). "And when Daniel knew that the writing [which prohibited prayer for thirty days, save to the king] was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber towards Jerusalem); and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. vi. 10, R.V.). But modern saints have done the like. Speaking of the home in which the Apostle of the New Hebrides was born, Dr. Paton says of his father: "The closet was a very small apartment, between 'the but' and 'the ben,' having room only for a bed, a little table, and a chair. This was the sanctuary of that cottage home. Thither daily, and oftentimes a day, generally after each meal, we saw our father retire, and shut-to the door; and we children got to understand by a sort of spiritual instinct (for the thing was too sacred to be talked about) that prayers were being poured out there for us, as of old by the High Priest, within the veil of the Holy Place. We occasionally heard the pathetic echoes of a trembling voice pleading as if for life, and we learned to slip out and in past that door on tiptoe, not to disturb the holy colloquy. The outside world

might not know, but we knew, whence came that happy light as of a new-born smile that was always dawning on my father's face: it was a reflection from the Divine Presence, in the consciousness of which he lived."

Regular Seasons of Prayer. We should pray in the morning. When the beasts of the forest are retreating to their lairs, man goes forth to his labour until the evening; but he should not go forth from a prayerless closet or an altarless home. He should commit himself and those he loves to the Father's care; he should put on his armour, and specially the panoply of all—prayer; he should remember all who travel by land and water, all who have to die before sundown, all to whom that day is to stand out in after-memories as the saddest or the gladdest of their experience. Yes, and when the evening falls, and the flowers close their petals, and the birds wheel in great circles to their nests, when the sounds of toil are hushed, and a great silence falls upon the earth, when the black dust has gathered on the soiled feet and the heavy burden has chafed the shoulders raw, we should kindle the embers in the prayer-censer and cast in much incense.

Prayer Without Ceasing. But we must not limit our prayers to these times. It is right and necessary to have set times. Most important is it that young people especially should be trained in holy habits, which—like the coral islands built from the depths of infinitesimal accretions—are the result of an innumerable series of prayers, offered without break at specified hours. Such habits help us in all our after-life, and form a strong barrier, which we are foolish to tamper with. But we must be careful not to crystallise all our devotion to one or two points in the day's experience. We must pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. We are to pray at all seasons and in all circumstances, often talking aloud to our Lord, as to one whom we might see, if only our eyes were not holden. The children do not confine their loving embraces to the formal greeting of dawn or eve, but seize every opportunity of flinging themselves into our embrace. Whenever a wave is rolling past you towards God, launch a prayer on it. Whenever a puff of wind rises, spread your sail, and take advantage of it. When you hear the goings in the tops of the trees, as though angels were hastening across their rustling leaves on their way home to God, strike your tent and follow, though it is high noon.

Opportunities of Prayer. As the Jew brought the first-fruits of field and garden, let us bring the first notes of each glad hour, the first yield of each new harvest. There are times when joy is at its full and demands expression in thankfulness. And in those hours when thoughts are high and imaginations radiant and affections vibrating with joy, what is more natural and beautiful than to turn to God with the soul's glad laughter and song! There are other times when we catch something of the beauty of the Divine life, and are filled with longing and yearning, as though our soul were pleading for its birthright or smitten with home-sickness. And at such times why should we not let ourselves mount up to the very heavens, and stand before the eternal glory of Love, and join in the happy processions of the radiant spirits in the highest! At other times we bear the burden of God's cause on earth. The glory of Christ in the salvation of souls and the upbuilding of His Church appears infinitely desirable. In the expressive language of Scripture, we travail until Christ be formed in the hearts of those we love. It is as though we were honoured to keep vigil with Christ for one brief hour in the garden. But at such times who shall deny us the right to pour out our souls with strong cryings and tears!

The Manner of Prayer. If you cannot fix your minds for long, let your words be few and concise and to the point. It is not the *length*, but the *strength* of prayer that appeals to heaven. The cry of the drowning Peter was short, but it brought the immediate response of the Saviour. If you cannot pray in thought, pray in speech. If you cannot pray kneeling, remember that David *sat* before the Lord. Pray as you find it easiest and best, only come *boldly* to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The Fragrance of Prayer. So far as our poor prayers have any fragrance, it is in their intercessory character. Unselfishness is the perfume of the disciples' prayer, as of the Master's. Our Lord prayed for Simon, when He knew that he was about to be sifted as wheat, and for those thoughtless hands that had nailed Him to the cross. In the model prayer which He taught His disciples, He made it impossible for them to do otherwise than pray for others when they prayed for themselves. We cannot ask for daily bread without including all who need not bread only, but love, and truth, and faith. We cannot ask for forgiveness without including our enemies as well as our friends, the ignorant and careless, the prodigal and rebel, the prisoner in the cell, and the criminal on the scaffold. We cannot

ask for deliverance from temptation and evil, without including all who are vain in their self-confidence as well as those who are weak and simple. Whenever we use the Lord's Prayer, as it is called, if we use it intelligently, we scatter the incense on the coals, and join in the ceaseless intercessions of our Lord. He takes up our poor weak petitions and joins them with His own, so that they accumulate volume and cogency in their passage. Watch the breaking of the big billows on the coast, and remember that each pulse of motion began in a tiny ripple caused by the touch of a catspaw of wind; and understand how a tiny prayer of yours may result in a billow that will break in thunder at the foot of the prayer throne.

Our Lord's Example in John xvii. It is in John xvii. that we can best study the true norm and type of Prayer. It is the incense Altar of the Gospels. There blend in these transcendent sentences the most extraordinary self-consciousness and the most absolute self-obliviation. He was conscious that the Father had loved Him before the foundation of the world; conscious of His absolute unity with the Father, so that there was a reciprocal *inness*; conscious that He had come to bless mankind. But He obliterates Himself. Sixteen times He mentions this world. It was as though, as He stood at the golden altar of Intercession, He forgot all the anguish of the morrow's tragedy, and thought only of His own, of those whom the Father had given Him, of those who should believe through their words, and of the great world of men, utterly thoughtless and careless, and going down into destruction, unwarned and unsaved. These are His petitions: That My joy may be fulfilled in them: that they may see and share My glory: that they may be with Me where I am: that they may be one, even as We are.

Intercessory Prayer. With such examples before us, who dares pray selfishly! Let us make intercession for the saints according to the will of God. If we will only yield ourselves up to the Divine Spirit, He will instil in our hearts the desires and petitions which Christ is uttering before the throne, and there is no prayer comparable to that. Before you begin to pray, keep silent for a space until you are conscious that the Spirit of Prayer is moving within you, and rising up towards God, and almost certainly the prayer which He suggests will have very little of *I, me, or my*, and will be replete with *we, us, and our*. There is no such clue to liberty in prayer as prayer for others. Our captivity, like Job's, is always turned, when we pray for our friends. Often when we have been pleading for

others, our Father hearing us turns and says: "What you have asked for others shall be granted, not to them only, but to you." It is well to have the egotism and selfishness of prayer strained off, by the necessity of asking for them in the same breath as for ourselves; and unselfish prayers will speed happily, as ships with fair winds, and come quickly to the desired haven.

Some Other Suggestions. The rubric of the golden altar is exceedingly suggestive, and almost every particular is replete with instruction.

(1) *We are taught by its close proximity to the Holy of Holies that prayer is the supreme act of the religious life.* The altar and the incense offered thereon are declared to be most holy (verse 36). The silent tear, the unchecked sigh, the unutterable groan, compose a language which is as sweet to God as the first articulate syllables of a little child to the parent. The kindling of the spirit's love, and the aspiration of its desire, which He Himself has kindled, are instantly recognised and responded to. Our Father who is in secret *seeketh* those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth; and when He finds them, He will much more give good things to them than the fondest of earthly parents will give good things to their children. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give." But why are we so slow to engage in the noblest function of which we are capable; and one which, whilst it elicits and strengthens the loftiest faculties of the soul, gives supreme pleasure to God! Let no day begin or close without a visit to the incense-altar:

"For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

(2) *Prayer is offered at an altar, therefore it involves sacrifice.* It is not natural or easy to our carnal nature. Indeed, it is only as we do violence to ourselves, as we deny our lower inclinations, as we are prepared to give up time and strength and deny ourselves society and pleasure, that we can really pray. A man has, like the Apostles, to give himself to prayer. He must stir himself up, who would take hold on God. "In prayer," says one, "the profoundest act of conscience and obedience is inwardly accomplished, for prayer is only

so far a laying hold and appropriation of God, as it is likewise *a sacrifice*; and we can only receive God unto us, when we likewise give ourselves unto Him. He who offers no sacrifice in his prayer, who does not sacrifice his self-will, does not really pray."

(3) *There is a close connection between the Altars of Brass and of Gold.* The one stands for Calvary whereon our Saviour died, the other for the throne, where He ever lives. The coals for the altar of incense were brought from the altar of burnt-offering (Lev. xvi. 12, 13). The relationship of the two Altars was further indicated by the correspondence between the times of their special use, for at the same hour, day by day, as the smoke of the burnt sacrifice ascended to God, the fragrant cloud of incense arose from the incense-altar. The *continual* burnt-offering, the morning and evening lamb, answered to the *perpetual* incense offered also morning and evening. Is not the lesson patent that we cannot pray aright unless we enter into the meaning of the Death of the Cross? And if we truly apprehend *that* we shall naturally and easily enter on a life of prayer. It has been truly said: "The incense-offering was not only a spiritualising and transfiguring of the burnt-offering, but a completion of it also." The consecration of the burnt-offering, i.e. the coming and delighting to do the will of God, finds its loftiest expression in the diffusion of the incense into the air, which is the symbol of the going forth of the soul to unite itself with the great origin and goal of its existence.

(4) *The application of the blood of sin-offerings reminds us that our best prayers are imperfect.* Once in the year, on the great day of Atonement, the High Priest, after burning incense within the veil, and sprinkling the blood of bullock and ram before the mercy-seat, took of the blood and put it on the horns of the altar of incense, "to make an atonement for it, to cleanse it and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel" (Lev. xvi. 18, 19). The lesson is obvious—even our prayers, the fruit of our holiest moments, need the cleansing efficacy of our Lord's work of Reconciliation. This was still further accentuated by the prescribed action of the High Priest when either he or the people had committed an offence through inadvertence. He was to put of the blood of the sacrifice on the horns of the altar of incense, for the expiation of his own sin and the sin of the people (Lev. iv. 3-21).

(5) *By the horns of the altar, which were symbols of power, we are reminded of the might of prayer.* Believing prayer moves mountains;

unties the hardest knots, unlocks prison-doors; is more effective, as Queen Mary confessed, than regiments of soldiers; opens and shuts heaven; brings showers upon the parched ground; claims and wins heathen lands for the Gospel; moves the Arm that moves the world; obtains whatsoever it saith; and puts in motion those divine and irresistible forces which we call revival, and which are due to the uplifting of the sluice-gates of divine energy for the salvation and uplifting of men. *Brethren, let us pray!*

XVII

THE RANSOM MONEY

EXODUS xxx. 11-16; xxxviii. 24-31

11. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

12. When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when *thou* numberest them.

13. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel *is* twenty gerahs:) an half shekel *shall be* the offering of the Lord.

14. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the Lord.

15. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when *they* give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls.

16. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls.

24. All the gold that was occupied for the work in all the work of the holy place, even the gold of the offering, was twenty and nine talents, and seven hundred and thirty shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary.

25. And the silver of them that were numbered of the congregation *was* an hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred and threescore and fifteen shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary:

26. A bekah for every man, *that is*, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for every one that went to be numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty *men*.

27. And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; an hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket.

28. And of the thousand seven hundred seventy and five *shekels* he made hooks for the pillars, and overlaid their chapters, and filleted them.

29. And the brass of the offering *was* seventy talents, and two thousand and four hundred shekels.

30. And therewith he made the sockets to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the brasen altar, and the brasen grate for it, and all the vessels of the altar.

31. And the sockets of the court round about, and the sockets of the court gate, and all the pins of the tabernacle, and all the pins of the court round about.

XVII

THE RANSOM MONEY

EXODUS xxx. 11-16; xxxviii. 24-31

The Ransom Money: Its Origin. The Tabernacle structure was, for the most part, reared by the voluntary offerings of the people, but an additional sum was required for the provision of silver and brazen sockets in which the boards of the Tabernacle and the pillars of the court were fixed. This amount, together with the metal for the completion of the fastenings and the provision of the vessels of the altar, was raised by a compulsory levy of half a shekel (amounting to about two shillings and fourpence of our money) from each person over twenty years of age. The rich might not give more, nor the poor less, and every one, from Moses himself downwards, was called upon to contribute. This money was viewed as a ransom-price for the soul.

Its Continuation. Afterwards the annual contribution of this sum for the upkeep of the Temple became a permanent arrangement. "They that received the half-shekel came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay the half-shekel?" (Matt. xvii. 24, R.V.).

A Thanksgiving for Mercy Shown. The precise significance of the phrase, "and atonement for your souls," is not perfectly easy to explain; but there seems to have been a nervous fear of the effect of a census in inducing pride, and so incurring the Divine displeasure. There is a trace of this in the present passage, "that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them" (verse 12). In David's time, also, Joab was extremely afraid of the prejudicial effect of the royal intention to number the nation. "And Joab said unto the king, Now the Lord thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it; but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? . . . And David's heart smote him after he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done. . . . I have done very foolishly" (2 Sam. xxiv. 3-10, R.V.).

"These sheep, what have they done? let thine hand be against me and my father's house" (1 Chron. xxi. 17, R.V.). In another account, the suggestion to number the people is attributed to Satan; and the plague which ensued was believed to be the direct infliction of deserved penalty. It appears, therefore, that this money was intended to avert the evil results that might accrue to any who failed to pay it; and it was also the thankful acknowledgment, on the part of each individual, in allowing him to be one of a great redeemed race.

"Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods?

Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? . . .

Thou in Thy mercy led the people *which Thou hast redeemed*" (Exod. xv. 11-13, R.V.).

Ourselves Our Redemption. The question may be addressed to each reader: Do you recognise that you belong to a redeemed world? Even if all do not avail themselves of the Redemption which has been achieved, yet it is available for all; and more benefits than we can ever estimate are always accruing since God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. As Israel was entangled in the land of Egypt, so entangled that it seemed impossible to break the meshes, until God delivered by His right hand, so our nature, which was meant to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, has been brought under the power of the senses and appetite. We are entangled and shut in by the tyrannical demands and craving. All may not be conscious of this, but it is a blessed consciousness. It is better to know yourself to have been entrapped and seduced, than never to have realised your high descent and your royal possibilities.

The Worth of Experience. Browning describes a sculptor creating a statue of Laocoön without the snakes entwining about his limbs, and it is placed in the market-place, to test the opinion of the passers-by. Some think that it is the statue of one who is yawning, or awakening and stretching himself. But the man who had been conscious of the wrestle of his soul with serpents knew that the artist had left out the reason for the tremendous contortions of the father and his sons. We, at least, know by inner experience what entanglement means. Every plunge for spiritual freedom only made our case more desperate, until the Redeemer stepped out of the infinite glory to undertake our case. The Lamb was slain from before the

foundation of the world, the blood has been sprinkled on the threshold of our world, the Red Sea has been passed, the Land of Promise is in view. He who might have taken advantage, Himself provided the remedy. How can we be thankful enough for the grace of our Lord Jesus!

The Indebtedness of all Men. There was no favouritism in His saving act. The best and greatest of men, as well as the lowest and worst, had come short of the glory of God. There was no difference in our absolute need of redemption from the guilt and power of evil. Wealth, rank, education, intellectual power made no difference to our infinite moral and spiritual deficiency and delinquency. And as there was no difference in the need, there was no difference in the remedy. "The Righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ is unto all them that believe; *for there is no distinction*; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 22-24, R.V.). *And there is no difference, either, between Jew and Greek*, "for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon Him, for, whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (x. 12, 13, R.V.). "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less." The rich might not give more, lest he be made proud, and the poor must give as much, that he might not be excluded from the benefits of the great deeds of the Lord.

A Personal Question. The question, therefore, is, Are you numbered among those who have availed themselves to the full of the riches of that grace and the exceeding riches of that glory which are yours through Christ? Have you thankfully paid your ransom-money, the token of your thankful recognition and believing appropriation?

A Heavy Tax. The total amount of this poll-tax was about £35,207 of our money. It may seem difficult to imagine how the Israelites should be possessed of so much wealth in the desert; but they had been enriched first by the spoils of the Egyptians and afterwards of the Amalekites, and this in addition to their ancestral wealth. As a matter of fact, this numbering or census was not until the second year of the Exodus had commenced. The erection of the Tabernacle took place on the first day of the first month of the second year, whereas the general census was taken on the first day of the second month (Exod. xl. 17; Num. i. 1). It is probable that the tax therefore was paid before the actual lists were made out. The names were given in when the contributions were paid, though the actual

counting only took place afterwards. Or it may be that when the census was made the people had become so depleted of their ready money, that it was resolved to consider the silver offered shortly before as being the prescribed poll-tax, so that they were not exposed to the pressure of a second demand.

The Conditions of the Census. Israel was still encamped before the mount; and the numbering was the first step towards the ordering of the camp, preparatory to the march, which began on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year. The two conditions of the census were, that each man should declare his pedigree, and be able to go forth to war (Num. i. 2, 3, 18). These conditions still obtain in the ranks of the redeemed. It is necessary, before any of us can fight against the rulers of the darkness of this world, that there should be no doubt about our pedigree. The mixed multitude that came out of Egypt failed in this. But among the children of Abraham the genealogical trees were kept with careful precision. Our first pedigree was in the dust, but Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a living hope by His Resurrection from the dead. They who believe in Christ have been born from above, and have been translated out of the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. "As many as received Him, gave He the right to become children of God, . . . which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 12, 13, R.V.).

The New Birth. Nothing is more important than this. As we were born into the world of sense and matter, so we need to be born into the world of the spirit, which is the real and eternal world. As we have learned to use the body, with its senses and aptitudes, so we must learn to use the spirit, with its affinity towards God. We may not be able to indicate the day or the hour, but we must know ourselves to be children of God, first, because old things are passed away, and all things have become new; and secondly, because God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. "Ye received not the Spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs" (Rom. viii. 15-17, R.V.).

Our Place in the Church of Christ. We should also pitch under our own standard; which, in our case, may be interpreted to signify

some branch of the visible Church to which we may be attracted by choice or birth, or both. None is perfect, but we must choose the one that best suits our characteristics and helps us. Belong to one of these, the one nearest your ideal. Be true to it, though retaining a catholic sympathy for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not be content with looking on. Do something! If you cannot march in the van with the stalwarts, help to carry the Tabernacle, if nothing better. The vessels are to be given in charge to faithful souls, that they may guard, through the Holy Ghost, what has been committed unto them. "Ye are holy unto the Lord, and the vessels are holy. . . . Watch ye and keep them, until ye weigh them at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the House of the Lord" (Ezra viii. 28, 29, R.V.).

XVIII

THE DESIGNATED ARTISTS

EXODUS xxxi. 1-11

1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2. See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:
3. And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.
4. To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,
5. And in cutting of stones, to set *them*, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.
6. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee;
7. The tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy-seat that *is* thereon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle.
8. And the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense,
9. And the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot,
10. And the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office,
11. And the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy *place*: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.

(See xxxv. 30—xxxvi. 1 for realisation of this pattern.)

XVIII

THE DESIGNATED ARTISTS

EXODUS xxxi. 1-11

The Artificers of the Tabernacle. The Almighty not only gave the pattern of the Tabernacle, but designated the men under whose direction and through whose genius and skill it was to be realised. "See, I have called by name Bezaleel" . . . "and I, behold, I have appointed with him Aholiab." Whilst their names were being thus mentioned in the secret place of the Most High, the two men were, in all probability, absolutely ignorant of what was awaiting them. The last thing that occurred to them was that they were to be summoned to this high task. As boys in Egypt they have often, no doubt, lingered to watch skilled artists at their work, and had stood intently watching deft fingers executing fair and beautiful designs, like those which modern discovery is retrieving from the debris of the past.

Their Position in Egypt. Presently, we may well believe, they developed precocious talent in first imitating and then originating fair and curious designs in various arts, as far removed as stone-engraving from wood-carving. They could devise cunning works, and could themselves work in all manner of workmanship. Perhaps they had become so proficient that they were employed by the priesthood and even by royalty to adorn the temples or palaces of Egypt, and might have secured their liberty from the toil of the brick-kiln and the lash of the taskmaster.

Their Choice at the Exodus. But, when the trumpets rang out their summons to depart, there was no hesitation as to their duty, and as their compatriots were mustering in the open spaces or marching through the midnight streets they joined them, with their wives and children, accounting the hope of the Messiah greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. They, too, like their great leader, had respect unto the recompense of reward: and it came to them, as it always does come to the loyal-hearted and true. To them

it happened, as so often, that, having surrendered all things for Christ, they found that they were restored and multiplied in their experience.

Their Work by the Way. During the earlier part of the march, they perhaps busied themselves in helping their fellow-pilgrims in the location, adaptation, and even the beautifying of their tents. What a lesson is suggested here to young men and others who are conscious of powers which as yet have obtained no adequate recognition or occasion! Go on doing what lies to your hand! Be faithful in the very little! Help those whose lives and homes are immediately adjacent to yours! As you are faithful in a very few things, the hour will strike when you will be summoned to rule over many things. He who shepherds his father's sheep in the pastures will be presently called to guide Israel like a flock. Even now God may be speaking your name to those who have loved you and have passed over into His Presence, saying, "Your prayers are heard; lo, I have called your son to be a Missionary or Minister of My Gospel. Your daughter is even now preparing to carry the blessing of salvation to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death." In the meanwhile, yield yourselves to His moulding hand. The diamond of rare size and brilliance may require months of careful handling ere all its facets are cut.

Bezaleel's Office. *Bezaleel*¹ was clearly designated as the supreme director of the construction of the Tabernacle; and for this end he was specially filled with the Spirit of God (verse 3). Naturally this was not without his personal acquiescence. But probably Bezaleel hardly realised what it meant when, in his wanderings through the camp, or beyond its precincts, either at night, when the stars blazed as we have never seen them in these Northern climes, or by day, when those cylindered peaks shone with resplendent colour, he felt his nature specially absorbed into the Being of God. He only knew that he opened his entire being to the gracious infilling of the Divine Nature, and that he surrendered all personal claim and ambition, if only God would occupy spirit, soul, and body with His divine and awful Presence. It was in answer to these devout and eager aspirations, that out of His fulness he received, and grace upon grace, like successive billows following one upon another from the ocean.

¹ In the R.V. his name is Bezalel, but it also appears in English Literature under his A.V. name.

Natural Gifts the Entrusted Talents. Natural gifts form the mould into which the divine fulness is poured to constitute them talents. The king gave to each of his servants according to their several ability—the ability standing for the natural faculty, which the royal recognition and bestowment enlarged, ennobled, and transfigured. See that by the reception of God's Spirit, your natural faculties become heavenly deposits. "That good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. i. 14, R.V.).

How the Spirit Wrought in Bezaleel. The Spirit of God wrought in Bezaleel in three directions—in Wisdom, in Understanding, and in Knowledge. These three words indicate distinct phases of the soul-life. *Wisdom* denotes the original genius which creates. It is that inventive faculty of conception which no amount of pains-taking toil can emulate, the superb endowment of a Beethoven, a Michael Angelo, or a Dante. *Understanding* denotes the aptness to appreciate and reproduce the suggestions and conceptions of the mind—the way in which they can be realised, the machinery to be created, the material to be employed, the instruments to be selected. *Knowledge* is the information which is acquired by experience—the facility obtained by use, the colours to be mixed on the palette and how to mix them, the dye necessary to produce a certain colour in the fabric, the blending of colours to produce a given effect, the handling of metals in the furnace or by the hammer.

The Awakening Power. These three faculties were doubtless present in embryo in the heart of the great artist; but when the Holy Spirit came on him, it was as though some Arctic island were floated into the midst of a tropical ocean, and all the seeds which had been lying dormant, beneath the strong hand of the Frost-King, suddenly became relaxed in the genial heat, and broke into luxuriant verdure. It was so with Gray, when he wrote his masterpiece on the Village Churchyard; and with Tennyson, who probably will be remembered in coming time rather by the *In Memoriam* than the Arthurian epic. Directly men and women yield themselves to the Spirit of God, the whole nature awakes, as in the fairy story the sleeping palace awoke at the winding of the bugle-call.

The Office of Aholiab. With Bezaleel was Aholiab. The words of his designation are carefully selected: "And I, behold, I have appointed *with* him Aholiab." Clearly the supreme direction of the entire structure was with Bezaleel, but Aholiab was his faithful

second and helper. A further reference informs us that he had entire charge of the textile fabrics, both woven and embroidered. He was "a craftsman, and a cunning workman, and an embroiderer in blue, and in purple, and in scarlet, and fine linen" (xxxviii. 23, R.V.). Probably he was especially alive to the beauty of colour, and had a peculiar gift in reproducing in various forms the glorious lines of mountain, sky, and valley, of the golden sand of the wilderness and the purple of the sea.

The Value of Co-operation. It was good for Bezaleel to have such a fellow-workman, and specially good to feel that *all* the good gifts of God had not been entrusted to his ample soul. It is always good for great souls to feel that they are not perfectly self-contained and self-sufficient. It is good for them to learn humility and interdependence. There is no record of rivalry or jealousy between the two. There were no rival parties in the camp. No one said, "I am of Bezaleel," or, "I am of Aholiab." Probably all were so intent on the great object in view, and so eager to contribute as much help and encouragement to its accomplishment, that there was no opportunity for the intrusion of rival claims. "None were for the party, and all were for the State." Oh, when shall so great a zeal for the glory of Christ and of His Church fall on Christians of all sects and denominations, that Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim but when with absolutely pure motives and unbiased hearts we shall strive together for the truth of the Gospel!

Other Helpers. It is interesting to learn that, in addition to these two, others were called in, concerning whom this remarkable statement is made: "In the hearts of all who are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee." Wisdom is put into the hearts of the wise-hearted. To those who have shall more be given, and they shall have abundantly. Give of what you have, and it shall be given you, full measure, pressed down, and running over. It is as you use your little gift, whatever it may be, and constantly part with what you have, that you will find the sphere of your usefulness, and rise to a higher influence for good in the Kingdom of God. The young preacher feels on each succeeding Sunday evening that he has preached his last thoughts, and wonders how he will hold out, but into the heart of the wise-hearted God puts wisdom.

The Link Between Religion and the Beautiful. In the remainder of this paragraph we are constantly reminded of the connection

between Religion and the Beautiful. The garments are finely wrought, and we remember that they were "for glory and *for beauty*" (xxviii. 2). The beautiful is not necessarily religious, but religion is likely to assume the form of beauty; therefore the Psalmist speaks of the beauty of holiness. Wherever beauty is associated with purity and rightness you are catching a glimpse of that primal creation which underlies all the phantasies and illusions of the present. Do not account it a waste that so much time and strength were expended on the Tabernacle, that genius and art were enlisted, that good men and women sought to embody their ideals in rich and lovely forms, that the rarest stones enhanced its wealth and flashed in the light of the Shechinah and the candlestick. All was intended, like Mary's alabaster box, to express a supreme love and realise a sublime plan. Our best is not good enough to say all our hearts want to say in the hours when tidal waves of holy emotion are rolling over our souls. Then the sweetest music is not sweet enough, and the highest art is not high enough, and jewels are not rare enough. One pearl of great price is altogether inadequate: we want a tray full of such. "Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet: praise Him with the psaltery and harp. Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him with the high-sounding cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord" (Ps. cl. 3-6, R.V.).

The Master and His Servants. Bezaleel could not build the Tabernacle alone, and Jesus Christ needs the co-operation of every soul whom He has redeemed. And "to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal. For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; to another faith, in the same Spirit," etc. (1 Cor. xii. 7, etc., R.V.). But each is called to fulfil some tiny piece of work in the great fabric which is rising through the ages for a habitation of God through the Spirit. If you do not know what your part is, ask the Master Architect to show you. Jesus said, "I will build My Church"—it is for Him, therefore, to select His workmen, and show them to what section of the growing fabric they are to address themselves. You may have to spin or weave, to design or execute, to dig the foundation or carve the pinnacle, to see to the comfort of the workers or carry them refreshment. Probably your sphere will be indicated by your natural aptitudes, by what you enjoy doing, and by what you can do best. Only do something!

The Office of Teacher. It is said of Bezaleel and Aholiab that they were specially qualified to teach (xxxv. 34). This is one of the most priceless gifts of all. They are many who know, but cannot make others know; who see, but are unable to impart their visions. Seek this great gift. For nothing will men be more thankful. Do not be niggard or stinting in your endeavour to pass on to others what God has taught you, or to communicate from the house-top what He has spoken to your ear in the closet. It is much to be an evangelist or herald of the truth, but perhaps it is an even greater work to remove misconceptions, to instruct the ignorant, and lead the saints into the deep things of God. It is written, "And they shall be all taught of God." It is necessary to be disciples before we can become Apostles, to sit at the feet of Jesus before we go everywhere publishing the good news. It takes time and patience. Line has to be upon line, and precept upon precept. But what a pleasure it is when the great teacher, like a Columba or a Bede, is able to civilise vast tracts of country through the young and ardent souls whom they have trained in the knowledge of God.

The Great Qualification. But, after all, the crying need of us all is to be filled, as Bezaleel was, with the Spirit of God. It is not enough to have the Spirit, the Spirit must have us. It is good that the shallowest waves of Pentecost have come up the sands to our feet, but we need the full tide. The dawn may have struck up into your heart, but has it grown into the perfect daylight that fills the whole arch of heaven? It is the privilege of every believer to live in the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, to be filled by the Spirit. The poor sempstress puts her penny in the slot of the gasmeter, and works as hard as the needle will fly, because she has no other, and her children's bread depends on her finishing her task. But God giveth not the Spirit *by meter* (this is the actual Greek word in John iii. 34). Will you not expand the lungs of your heart, and take a long, deep inspiration, and believe that, according to your capacity, so it is unto you? It is not necessary to *feel* that you have received. Dare to believe it, and that your Father has given you what you asked, though the Spirit is so gentle and ethereal that He eludes our coarse tests, and enters like the summer zephyr, which hardly rustles the leaf of the sensitive plant, and fails to shake the over-blown petal to the grass beneath.

XIX

GOD'S SABBATH-REST AND OURS

EXODUS xxxi. 12-17

12. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

13. Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it *is* a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that *ye* may know that I *am* the Lord that doth sanctify you.

14. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it *is* holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth *any* work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

15. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh *is* the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth *any* work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

16. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, *for* a perpetual covenant.

17. It *is* a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for *in* six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

XIX

GOD'S SABBATH-REST AND OURS

EXODUS xxxi. 12-17

A Reminder. It is somewhat strange to have this recurrence to the great law of the Sabbath, which, it might be supposed, had already been adequately dealt with. But here, and again in xxv. 1-3, fresh emphasis is laid upon its observance. It has been thought that the intention was lest the people's zeal in Tabernacle construction might induce a laxity in the maintenance of Sabbath-observance. Be that as it may, we may at least be reminded that our zeal for God's service must never interfere with that deep restfulness of heart, and that careful use of the Lord's Day, out of which the highest and best service must emanate.

The Sabbath a Sign. Two new particulars are introduced by this paragraph. First, that the Sabbath was to be a sign—it has been called “a distinguishing badge,” and “a sacramental bond”—between God and Israel; and, secondly, that its desecration was to be punished with death.

Before that time, the rite of circumcision had been the only visible sign of the Covenant into which Jehovah had entered with the seed of Abraham (Gen. xvii. 9-14; Acts vii. 8). But something else was required to differentiate the *entire* nation from the rest of mankind; and this was afforded by the absolute cessation of servile toil on the seventh day of the week. Juvenal mentions this as the distinguishing mark of the Jew in the days of the Empire; and, as all the world knows, it is equally distinct and distinguishing to-day. It was also a sign that God was sanctifying His people. The word means to set apart, and to set apart, not only outwardly but inwardly, by an all-pervasive indwelling. When God said that He would sanctify the people of Israel these two thoughts were involved, first, that He would set a distinguishing and characteristic mark upon them, and secondly, that He would dwell among them, filling them with the

sense of His Presence, journeying with them in their march, resting when they rested, elevating and purifying their standards, aspirations, and communal life. Each of these objects was realised through the institution of the Sabbath, by which the Hebrews were differentiated from all other nations, and in which time was given for the spiritual to pervade and master the material. On the Sabbath the din of worldly toil ceased, and gave opportunity for the still small voice, the dust of the march subsided, so that the pure and heavenly horizons might come in view. The setting a part of one day in seven for religious worship reminded Israel, and made clear to all mankind, that they were a religious people, and that they were prepared to make sacrifices of a very distinct nature for their religious duties. No nation can allow a permanent invasion of the Rest-Day without invalidating its claim to be a religious and God-honouring people, and breaking those sacred covenant-bonds by which the divine help and deliverance are secured. Disregard of God is evidenced in nothing more certainly than by a disposition to break in upon the day of rest; and no such infringement can take place without the gravest injury being perpetrated on religion and morals. By the institution of the Sabbath, God made it clear that He regarded man as a religious being, that He claims his thought and time, and that for man's own sake, physical, moral, and religious, it is necessary that there should be the weekly pause.

The Punishment of the Sabbath-Breaker. The infliction of death on the Sabbath-breaker seems at first sight severe. But it must be remembered, on the other hand, that this repeated insistence on the keeping of the Sabbath rendered the breach of its observance a premeditated and presumptuous violation of the Divine Reign. The Hebrew nation was not an *oligarchy*, ruled by a few, nor a *democracy*, ruled by the crowd, nor an *aristocracy*, ruled by the best, but a *theocracy*, i.e. ruled by God. And the offender who deliberately set God at defiance was guilty of an act of high treason. He destroyed, so far as in him lay, the entire covenant between God and His people. If all did as he did, the whole nation would have been thrown out of the covenant, and the alliance which had been established in the days of Abraham, and had been the basis of the Exodus, would have been shattered into a thousand fragments. Hence it was that, all through the history of the chosen people, the maintenance or violation of the Sabbath was deemed an infallible sign of health or decline, of consecration or apostasy.

The Power of the Sabbath Law. It is an interesting fact that through all the centuries of Jewish history, whatever other offences they may have been guilty of, the nation, as a whole, has been true to the Sabbath law, as we have said. To employ the words of Exod. xxxi. 16, R.V., "They shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant." Can it, therefore, be doubted that the Almighty also will respect that Covenant? Sooner shall His covenant of day and night cease, than that He should fail to perform His side of that sacred pledge which He has made with the children of Abraham; and probably all the agitation and ferment of modern Europe will eventuate in the sweeping away of the last obstacle to the return of the chosen people to the chosen land. "Thus saith the Lord: If My covenant of day and night stand not, if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I also cast away the seed of Jacob . . . for I will cause their captivity to return, and will have mercy on them" (Jer. xxxiii. 25, 26, R.V.).

Grounds of the Sabbath Law. *But the ground on which the command for Sabbath Observance rests is very remarkable.* "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed" (ver. 17).

Its Necessity. There are many grounds on which we might argue for the preservation of the rest day. (1) *It is a physical necessity.* Man is a seven-day clock which requires the weekly rest to recuperate exhausted energies, and impart a new zest to his daily occupation. (2) *It is a family necessity.* The parents and children are too busily engaged in the pursuit of education and business during the six working-days to cultivate each other's companionship, and the seventh-day rest is urgently needed to afford opportunities for the maintenance and cultivation of the common home-life. (3) *It is a national necessity.* The heated machine of our political and social activity requires the cooling pause of the rest-day, when men of all shades of politics kneel under the same roof in the presence of the Almighty Ruler of us all.

The Work of Creation. (4) *The ground mentioned here is very remarkable.* "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed." The days of the first chapter of Genesis, by general consent, may be reckoned as *æons*, and represent in Apocalyptic vision the majestic steps up which creation advanced from the formlessness of its earlier stages to

the order and beauty of the later, of which God said, "They are very good."

That the heaven and earth owe their existence to God is the statement not only of Scripture, but of science. "Science," said Lord Kelvin, when speaking at London University College, "positively affirmed creative power. Was there anything so absurd as to believe that a number of atoms, by falling together of their own accord, could make a sprig of moss, a microbe, or a living animal? Biologists only knew God in His works, but they were absolutely forced by science to admit, and to believe with absolute confidence in a directive power—in an influence other than physical, dynamical, or electrical forces." In a letter which appeared in the *Times* shortly afterwards he said: "Scientific thought is compelled to accept the idea of creative power"; and further: "Forty years ago I asked Liebig, when we were walking together in the country, if he believed that the grass and flowers which we saw around us grew of mere chemical forces. 'No,' he answered; 'no more than I could believe that a book of botany describing them could grow of chemical force.'"

The Rest of God. But what are we to infer from the words *He rested, and was refreshed*? Clearly this was not the result of weariness. "The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary." Though engaged for untold ages in creating out of nothing, and in shaping what He had created, there was no exhaustion in His design, no slackening of His interest, no over-strain of His power.

Clearly, also, it was not the rest of inaction. When the Jews sought to slay Jesus because He had done this work on the Sabbath day He answered them, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." It was as though He said: "Go back to your ancient record, the Book of Genesis, and you will find there that of each of the days of Creation it was said, the evening and the morning was the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth day. But there was no evening and morning to the seventh day; and My Father, though He rests, works ceaselessly. He maintains the universe, controls and guides the course of human history, unlocks the gates of day, and draws the dusky curtains of the night; opens His hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing. He has been at work up to this very moment, and it was His direction and impulse that wrought through Me to the healing of this man."

The Rest after Finished Work. The rest of God was that of completion and satisfaction. "The heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." All the work of building the house for human life and rearing a platform for the mighty drama of redemption was concluded. There were other and greater works waiting to be done, but, so far as the material universe was concerned, there was nothing to be altered or added.

The Lord's Day Memorial. It is into this rest that we are summoned to enter. And of its blessed peace and joy the weekly rest-day returns as a gracious reminder. As each Sabbath came to the Jew, so does each Lord's Day come to the Christian. We are reminded by its frequent recurrence of the possibility of entering upon our inheritance; nay, more, we are incited and urged to enter it. "There remaineth, therefore, a Sabbath-keeping for the people of God." "Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience" (Heb. iv. 11, R.V.). As each rest-day breaks upon the earth, ask yourself seriously, "Do I know anything of that peace which is the reality of which this day is the type? Have I entered into the rest of God? Has my life attained its divine ideal and purpose, in harmony with the Spirit of the Creator Himself?"

Six Days of Training the Religious Experience. The work of the six days may be taken as indicating the successive stages in the education of the soul into this divine experience. There is, without doubt, a supreme moment in the life of the regenerate soul, when God creates His own nature within it. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation." It is not the reshaping of old materials, but the positive calling into being a new and wonderful life, which is to attain to the excellency of the stature of Christ. A love of God, that was never experienced in that cold heart; a hatred of sin; a taste for things that were once irksome; a loathing of things once loved—all are indications of the Creator's workmanship. But the work is far from done. Large regions of the hinterland are still given up to the trackless waste and the wild beast. But from the first moment of the new birth the Holy Spirit broods over the formless void, to mould and form, to conduct the soul, with infinite patience, to its perfecting.

How great a comfort it is to realise that this is God's method! Sometimes it seems as though the fabric on which He has been expending care and time is suddenly overthrown, as the vegetation

of the carboniferous age were plunged into the dark cellars of the ground. But in such hours we must joyfully acknowledge that all is not gone, but that God is still at work, and on the base of what He has already done is about to build up more. He never grows faint nor discouraged, because only through successive stages can character advance towards the Second Adam of the sixth day and the Sabbath-Keeping of the Seventh. "We know not what we shall be."

God's Work in You. What is Its Stage? How far has the Almighty Craftsman got in His work on your soul? Has he reached the *first* day, when Light begins to penetrate the dark recesses of the soul, revealing it to itself, and leading to an agony of conviction and penitential grief? Have you reached the *second* stage, the stage of separation, where you are conscious that a great division is at work separating the below from the above, the earthly and the heavenly, the carnal and the spiritual, as by a far expanse of firmament? Or is your present experience that of the *third* day, when as the silt dropping from the laden waters causes the land to appear, so in you also, firm habits of character are beginning slowly to reveal themselves? Or, perhaps, you are living in the *fourth* day, when the envelope of the environing mist is beginning to break away, and you are beholding, for the first time, clearly the face of Christ? Or yours may be the activity of the *fifth* day, with its various forms of life. But what are all these compared to the wonders of the *sixth* day, when God makes you into the image of His Son, when, as you have borne the image of the earthly, you begin to bear the image of the heavenly, when old things have passed absolutely and for ever away, and behold all things are become new!

God's Patient Working. Ah, soul! upon whom God's creative and formative processes have commenced, He may yet take years and æons of years, until Christ is perfectly formed in thee, and thou shalt be manifested as His Son; but He will perfect that which concerneth thee, because His mercy endureth for ever, and He will not forsake the work of His own hands. The nature of Christ cannot be deduced from our sinful nature, it must be imparted. It must grow as the child Jesus grew, because it can only be ours in proportion as we apprehend and appropriate the fulness of Christ. Objectively we stand fully accepted and complete in Jesus; but experimentally we only receive as much as we see our need of and accept.

The Rest for Us. Thus we come to the Rest of which the Sabbath

spoke. We enter into the Rest of God, and the Rest of God enters and pervades our soul. We know that we have passed from death into life; that we are justified from all things; that we are accepted in the Beloved; that we are sons of God and joint heirs with Christ; that all things work together for good; that the grace of God will always be sufficient for our need; and that grace will one day flower into glory; and out of these convictions comes the Peace of God that passeth understanding and the inward calm out of which the noblest service emanates.

XX

TABLES OF THE TESTIMONY

EXODUS xxxi. 18; xxxii. 15-20; xxxiv. 1, 28, 29

18. And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

15. And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony *were* in his hand: the tables *were* written on both their sides: on the one side and on the other *were* they written.

16. And the tables *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

17. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, *There is* a noise of war in the camp.

18. And he said, *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.

19. And it came to pass, as soon as he came 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.

20. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder, and strawed *it* upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink *of it*.

1. And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first; and I will write upon *these* tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.

28. And he 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.

29. And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.

XX

TABLES OF THE TESTIMONY

EXODUS xxxi. 18; xxxii. 15-20; xxxiv. 1, 28, 29

Tabernacle and the Tables. When Moses received the first invitation to come up into the Mount and be there, the Almighty told him that He was about to give him the tables of stone, on which He had written (xxiv. 12); and when directions were communicated for the construction of the ark, it was assumed that some embodiment of the law would be forthcoming, which would be placed in that sacred receptacle (xxv. 16). It was therefore befitting that, when God had made an end of communing with Moses upon Mount Sinai, He should give him the two tables of the Testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. We might almost go so far as to say that the entire Tabernacle was designed with the view of the safe-keeping of the law, written upon these stone tablets, in the very heart of the national life.

An Appeal to the Nation. We use these words "national life" advisedly, because we are not unmindful of the language uttered by one of the greatest of modern statesmen. "May I ask you," said John Bright to the citizens of Birmingham in 1858, "to believe, as do myself devoutly believe, that the moral law was not written for men alone in their individual character, but that it was written as well for nations, and for nations as great as this of which we are citizens. If nations reject and deride that moral law, there is a penalty which will inevitably follow. It may not be at once; it may not come in our life-time; but rely upon it that while the sword of Heaven is not in haste to smite, yet it will not linger. We are not left without a guide. It is true that we have not, as an ancient people had, the Urim and Thummim—those oracular gems on Aaron's breast, from which he took counsel—but we have the unchangeable and eternal principles of the moral law to guide us; and, only so far as we walk by that guidance, can we be permanently a great nation, or our people a happy people."

The Permanence of the Law Signified. *The use of stone bore witness to the imperishableness of the Divine Law.* Stone is more enduring as a custodian of engraving than metal. Gold and silver are comparatively soft, iron corrodes, steel was unknown at that period. The material selected to receive the moral law was the most indestructible that the world contained. Even now those tablets may exist, and one day may be discovered amid the remains of the great past. We are reminded, therefore, that no jot or tittle shall pass away from the law until all be fulfilled. The Apostle brings out a strong contrast to the stone tablets of Sinai when he says that the Spirit of the living God writes not now on tables of stone, but on tables which are hearts of flesh (2 Cor. iii. 3); and yet perhaps memory is just as indestructible, and retains the impression of the Divine law with equal tenacity as granite.

The Writing—God's. *The law was written by the finger of God.* We cannot understand precisely what is intended, but realise that the Eternal would not transmit to the loftiest of the sons of light the duty of making clear that holy law, which was commanded to Israel "for their good always." Everything was done to invest the law with majesty and authority; to no inferior being could be delegated the promulgation of law which from all eternity had been shaped and compacted in the Divine mind; before ever God's thought had clothed itself in creation, or filled the morning stars with singing.

The Writing—On Both Sides. *We are told also that the tables were written on both their sides* (xxxii. 15). Does not this teach that the moral law is written both within and without the human heart, pressing externally upon us as a rule of righteousness which we are constrained to obey, and approved from within by the voice of conscience? There is no room for the insertion of any other law. Human accretions are forbidden, because there is no space for them; and may it not be that the additions which man has made to the Divine law have led, not only to most of the divisions of the Church, but to much of the atheism and infidelity, which resent obligations that are not witnessed to by the moral consciousness?

The reason for the proclamation of the law, and its engraving upon these tables is clear. Paul explains it exactly when he says, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

The Necessity for the Law. It is necessary that God should set before men the norm or type of the life that He Himself is living,

and of which we are capable, in order that He may reveal the true nature of sin, and lead men to abhor it. Adam in Paradise lived an easy, contented life, of which probably his own gratification was the law. He looked upon the tree, and saw that it was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes. What was good and pleasant was his supreme law; and so he might have continued to live in innocent self-indulgence, using the world around for animal gratification, with no knowledge of the injury that he was doing to himself and of the blessing that he was forfeiting. It was necessary therefore that the command should come, "Thou shalt not eat." He was told that he must refrain from gratifying his desire for his own pleasure, and begin to acknowledge a higher ideal. Then it was for the first time he knew himself to be a sinner. The law came to show him that the life he was living was a violation of the principles of his moral nature, obedience to which could alone secure blessedness for him.

How the Law Works. It is as though in a certain village, a lad endowed with the elements of a beautiful voice were to use it after his own fancy, in such a way as to injure the vocal organs and undermine his health. The villagers may gather around him in the evening, full of admiration; his fame may spread throughout the countryside, but all the while, though he is unconscious, he is approximating to an absolute silence that will put an untimely end to his career. Finally he goes to the great city, consults a professor of music, sings in his presence, and is examined by a specialist. The laws of voice production are explained to him, and it comes on him as a thunder-clap to understand the mistake that he has made, the injury that he has inflicted upon himself, the inevitable failure of all his ambitions. A new and higher law has suddenly broken in upon the lad, and there is no option but to accept its absolute condemnation for his own efforts, and to submit to its rule. He was alive without the law in his own estimation until he caught sight of its majestic beauty and irrevocable demands, then he died to his own way, renounced it, and yielded himself to the influence of the higher and better method.

The Case of St. Paul. The same process took place in the history of St. Paul. Through long years he had lived according to the highest order of Pharisee. He had no conception of anything better than to fast twice in the week, to give tithes of all he possessed, and to refrain from extortion and injustice. Indeed, he verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus.

When he thrust men and women into prison, broke up the Christian meetings, and even imbrued his hands in Stephen's blood, he thought that he was doing God service. Then in the person of Jesus of Nazareth the law of infinite love, mercy and forgiveness broke into his soul, and he was overwhelmed with remorse. The commandment which was unto life he found to be unto death. He saw that the commandment demanded not simply an outward obedience, but searched the inward motive. It was as though a new light pervaded the recesses of his soul, and revealed the hideous things which were nestling there. He learned that what he had thought to be good would not pass muster amid the holy radiance that shone from the face of Jesus, reflected there from the heart of God.

The Case of the Israelites. The same law wrought here at Sinai, and when God uttered His law from the mount, and afterwards entrusted it to the hands of Moses in this written form, the intention was to show the people who had become steeped in the sensuality of Egypt, and whose notions of morality had become impoverished and corrupted, that the true blessedness of man could be attained, not by his following the impulses and passions of his evil heart, but by self-discipline, self-control, the refusal of the lower, the forsaking of the things that were behind, and the pressing up and on to those that were before.

The Purpose of the Law. Let it never be forgotten, therefore, that law is the expression in a preceptive form of a life which God is living, and for which man was created; it comes to change the sin of ignorance into the sin of presumption; it comes to teach that the law for human life is not self-indulgence, but self-sacrifice; it comes to reveal man to himself, that he may be shut up to the mercy and help of God. The law entered that sin (i.e. knowledge of sin) might abound, and that where sin abounded grace might abound more exceedingly; that as sin reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life through Jesus Christ (Rom. v. 20, 21).

Law and Sin. The course of human life has been compared to a river, flowing through a level plain slowly but steadily towards the sea. So smooth is its surface that a traveller approaching could not tell in what direction it was flowing, or whether it was flowing at all. A rock in mid-channel, protruding above the surface, reveals the current by the rippling circle of water at its base. The obstruction makes known both the direction and velocity of the river's flow.

It detects the movement, though it does not produce it. Such is the relation between sin in the soul and the law which reveals it. Our life, before the law of God enters, rolls downward like a river—one great volume of enmity against God. Because all is sin, the self-deceived man does not notice that there is any. But when the law of God enters, collision between it and the direction of our life makes it known that hitherto we have been living without God in the world.

The People's Fall. When Moses drew near the scenes which were being enacted at the foot of the mount, he fell in with Joshua, who must have been waiting for his descent. The sounds of unholy revelry reached their ears, which Joshua mistook for the shouts of combatants. Moses, however, having been instructed as to the actual nature of the proceedings, declared that it was not the voice of them that shouted for mastery, nor the voice of them that cried for being overcome, but the noise of them that sang. Then, as the two came suddenly round the corner of the gorge through which they were descending, and the whole terrible spectacle burst on their view, Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hand, and they were broken beneath the mount. For this act he was never rebuked. It partook of the nature of that anger described by the Apostle when he says, "Be ye angry, and sin not." Indeed, probably it would have been impossible for anyone to have been in contact with the holiness of God for six weeks without the reaction of hot indignation and horror, when brought suddenly face to face with such a revelation of the evil of man's heart. But as those tables leapt from crag to crag, and lay presently splintered and broken at the foot of the mount, were they not an emblem of the way in which man's sin breaks the Divine law and cancels the covenant of works?

The Law and the World of Sin. The descent of Moses into that scene is an emblem of the law's entrance into a world of sin. The law comes not to a people waiting to receive the knowledge of God's will, but busy with their own plans of self-indulgence. Its advent, therefore, can only be in wrath. It falls upon the idolatrous crowd, and grinds them to powder; it casts a spell of silence over the voice of those that sing, and the shadow of death upon the idolater.

The New Tables Laid Up. But the story does not end here. The Lord bade His servant hew two tables of stone, like unto the first, and on these He wrote the words which were on the first tables, i.e. the Ten Commandments. These Moses brought down the mount

and placed reverently in the ark, laying the golden slab of the mercy-seat above them. Upon that slab of gold the Shechinah of God's purity shone; beneath it were the tables of the law; but the mercy-seat, being covered with the blood of Atonement, told that sacrifice had been offered and accepted, and that the penitent need fear no longer the penalty that followed on the violation of law.

Law and the Great Propitiation. The mercy-seat, as we have seen, was the propitiatory, a place where God and the sinner were made at one. All that was meant, however, can only be understood by those who have seen the Lamb of God bearing away the sin of the world. Sinai can only be fully understood when the truth it signified appeared. It was when Jesus said, "It is finished," that the truth broke upon the world that the true Atonement cannot be a life which God can claim—a creature life—but the life which God Himself offers—Himself. Some dim glimpse of this thought may have been caught by the more earnest worshippers under the law, but to many it must have remained veiled, as is the depth of Gospel truth to many believers now. The Israelite was specially taught to connect his acceptance, not with a work which he had invented, but with one which God had appointed. It was by God's way, and not by his own, that he was brought nigh, and this substitution of God's way for man's involved an act of obedient faith, which ultimately led into the Holy of Holies, laid open by the death of Jesus.

The Cross Explained by Sinai. Never was the mercy-seat so precious to the worshipper under the old dispensation as when he realised the demands of God's holy law; and men are never likely to apprehend the meaning of the Cross unless they too have shivered under the thunders of Sinai. Then we understand for the first time the words, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us"; then we open our hearts to the blessed Spirit, that He may reproduce Christ within us. He who gave the law, and conformed to it during His human career, becomes within us the fountain of obedience. When the love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, our love becomes the congenial atmosphere through which He secures a recognition of and loyalty to the law, such as could never have been secured by the *must* of Sinai, but is easy beneath the spell of the wooing note of Calvary.

XXI

THE GOLDEN CALF

EXODUS xxxii. 1-6; 21-29

1. And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, 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.

2. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* unto me.

3. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* unto Aaron.

4. And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

5. And when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a feast to the Lord.

6. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

21. And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

22. And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they *are set* on mischief.

23. 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.

24. 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.

25. And when Moses saw that the people *were* naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto *their* shame among their enemies:)

26. Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who *is* on the Lord's side? *let him come* unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

27. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, *and* go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

28. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

29. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

XXI

THE GOLDEN CALF

EXODUS xxxii. 1-6; 21-29

The People, and the Absence of Moses on the Mount. Terrified by the loud thunderings and lightnings, the thrilling trumpeting of Sinai, with which the Almighty inaugurated His Law, the people of Israel entreated Moses that he would henceforth act as a daysman and mediator between God and them. "Go," said they, "into the immediate pavilion of the Almighty, and stand there and receive His Word, and then return and impart it to us in modulated tones." Acting upon their suggestion, Moses therefore betook himself up the steep mountain-side of Sinai, and being lost presently to view in the mists, stepped into the pavilion of God's presence, and remained there for some six weeks. The seventy elders that accompanied him part of the way, content with having seen the Sapphire Throne beneath His feet, and having ate and drank in His presence, returned, and for a little time Israel was pacified. But as week succeeded week, they became restless, and began to wonder what might have become of their great leader. They felt on the one hand that the embodiment of Deity had been withdrawn from them, that the moral restraint of a holy life had also ceased to operate, and in the recoil the licentious passions that had been surging in the hearts of the people since they lived in the land of Egypt began to crave for gratification. The moral restraint having been withdrawn, and the difficulty of realising the spirituality of God being so great, the people began to relapse into idolatry. They said, "Something has happened to our great leader, he must have met with an accident in his long and perilous ascent, or he may have been consumed with the burning fire whose glory dazzled our sight, or he may have been absorbed into the Deity. In any case, we know not what has become of him, and it seems as if he may never return. Therefore, Up! make us something that we can see, some embodiment of Deity that shall go before us, and

bring us to the land to which we travel." This is an amazing scene, but full of the most impressive lessons.

Moses the "Man of God." (1) *The uplifting and restraining character of a holy life.* Moses is perpetually referred to as the "man of God." We notice that even Caleb, who had known him intimately for many years, so describes him (Josh. xiv. 6). It is interesting when our bosom companions and the servants of our household speak of us as men of God, for they know our every action and see us as we are. Hundreds of years after, in the Book of Ezra (iii. 2), Moses is still described as the "man of God." This description was also applied to Elisha, who was a softer and gentler character than Elijah. Elijah stood on the rocky pinnacle, and rebuked kings amid the thunders and lightnings, but Elisha was one who went in and out amongst the people, healing and blessing them, so much so that the wife of one of the great landowners, who lived in the neighbouring mansion, said to her husband, "I perceive that this is a holy man of God that passes by us continually." It is evident to the most casual eye, when a man is of a really holy and consistent character. It is a great designation, the "man of God." We all know what it is to be "a man of the world." There are many men who are perfectly cognisant of the world around, of its habits and customs, of its good form or bad, not knowing that they are standing upon a bubble that may break at any moment; that they are swimming with a life-buoy which is beginning to leak and will be unable always to sustain them amidst the storms. We know "the man of letters." It is much to be able to charm the imagination and guide the thought of people. We honour the statesman, who, like Pitt, guides the country with eagle eye, and stands supreme amongst his fellows; and the commercial man, who prefers his good name to any profit that may come by chicanery; but the "man of God" is the supreme title of all. We feel that there is a flame burning in his heart, and that his life is like some broad river, spreading fertility and beauty everywhere.

The Power of the Holy Life. The people had seen Moses under many difficult circumstances. They had beheld him face to face with Pharaoh, daring to hurl back a retort on the greatest tyrant the world had seen; they had wondered at him amid the awful terror of the night of the passage through the Red Sea; and when Moses had spoken from Sinai God had answered him with a voice. They felt that so long as Moses was there they had an incarnation of

Deity, and that God was with them and near them. They realised the moral restraint and uplifting influence of his soul. One man, by the nobility and purity and simplicity of his character, kept two and a half millions of people on the high uplands of monotheism and spirituality. After such a fashion all of us are called to live in the home, in the business house, and amongst men, with so much of God in us that to see us will make men think of God; and to have us with them is to experience a moral restraint arresting them in the gratifying of their passions. Thus we shall be as an antiseptic in the midst of pollution, our influence proceeding not so much from what we say as from what we are. When Moses' presence was withdrawn the people said to Aaron, "Make us gods."

—**A Power in all Ages.** We are called not only to be Christians, but Christs, to reduplicate and repeat the life of Jesus to men. It is in the strength of your character, in the flash of the eye, the blush of purity on the face, the instinctive shrinking of the soul from contact with pollution, the uplifting of the heart toward God which people experience who live in your proximity and listen to your talk. It must be a living and evident fact that you have no complicity with the evil influences around you and that your nature aspires God-ward. The Christian soul resembles the flower that has no speech nor language, and whose voice is not heard. We cannot see the lily growing out of the filthy pond without instinctively being led to desire to be clean. We cannot see the long line of snow-clad Alps, rising from the valleys where mists and miasma lurk, without desiring to climb up and stand amidst those eternal snows. What a tribute to the magnificence of this man's character who thus presented God to the people! As long as they had Moses they had been clean, he restrained them, and was a barrier against a tide of filth.

Aaron's Weakness. (2) *The injury done to society by the weakness of moral character.* We should have thought that when Moses was gone, the most natural thing would be for the people to go to Aaron and say, "Moses has gone, be to us in his stead." But they never thought of it, because, although probably Aaron had never been betrayed into any moral evil, by that instinctive knowledge which we all have as to the quality of another's soul, they knew that Aaron was a weak man. It is a remarkable thing in life that men will sooner or later betray themselves, and others will estimate them by a moral diagnosis which is absolutely certain in its action. You may be a priest; you may pose a mediator, to guide people in their intercourse

with God; you may parade the religious ceremonial with which you are associated, but the world looks beneath the dress of the priest to the character of the man. You may dress Aaron as you like, put the breastplate upon his heart and the golden mitre upon his brow, but public opinion will read Aaron, and know that he at least is not the incarnation of Deity. We always attribute strength to true goodness, and doubt a goodness which is not pervaded with virility.

Aaron Temporises. In this diagnosis the people did not mistake, for there were two signs of moral weakness in Aaron's behaviour. *First*, when they demanded that he should prepare a calf as a visible deity, instead of meeting them, as he should have done, with a direct negative, he set himself to place difficulties in the way of carrying out their desire. He reasoned with himself, "It is a mere passing whim. I will not therefore contradict them, lest they stone me, but I will throw back the difficulty upon them, and let them obtain from their wives and children their earrings and ornaments." It is a custom in the Orient, where banks are few and untrustworthy, for the people to carry as much wealth as possible in ornaments upon their persons. He said to himself, "They will never deny themselves their rich jewels, and thus I shall be delivered from doing what I know to be wrong." We are often tempted to reason after a similar fashion. We know that a thing is wrong, but instead of saying so, we endeavour to evade the fact, and try to get the credit of virtue by raising a side issue. But the event does not justify our expectations. So far from Aaron's hopes being realised, they were falsified, and the people began to pour in with their golden ornaments, stripping their persons in their enthusiasm, and Aaron, to his mortification, found himself compelled to carry out their purpose. In this there was an exact counterpart in Pilate's paltering with the demand of the High Priest that Jesus should be crucified. In each case the result was the same.

Aaron's Defence of Himself. *Secondly*, when Moses came down from the mount, full of burning indignation, Aaron replied to his hot remonstrances by saying, "Brother, you understand this people, that they are stiff-necked. They gave me the gold, I put it into the furnace, and *there came out this calf*. I did not do it; it was the furnace that did it. Pity me, I am the unlucky creature of circumstances." There is a type of man that lays the whole stress of his failure on circumstances, and unjustly accentuates these. "It was not I, but the furnace." You are called to deal with a sensualist—

a profane, evil-living man. You ask him how he came to this, and he will answer—"I was thrown into a bad set at college; I was swept into a wild circle when I came to London. In my business they flattered me, and in my poverty they trampled on me. I am no saint; but then you cannot blame me. Look at my circumstances; it is the furnace that did it." A woman of society and fashion will say, "I admit that I am not what I might be, but then look at my set; it is the furnace that did it." A man will doubt God, question the Bible and truth, and excuse himself by saying, "It is not I, it is the drift of modern tendency; it is the furnace that did it." "There came out this calf."

The Influence of the Infirm Character. Yes, streams are always flowing, the streams of impurity, of worldly materialistic living, of atheism—but are you going to launch forth on the stream? That is the point. Of course, if you yield, you will soon be swept into the current. There are scores of young people who might be gripped and held back if you were strong, but your weak compliance with the habits and traditions around will relax the one saving influence of their lives. At this very moment God in His high heaven was talking with Moses about Aaron's garments, and sketching out for him the great programme of his priesthood, which certainly would have been carried out, whatever the people determined to the contrary, because God would have protected him. Whilst this mighty future was being planned for him yonder, see how he was demeaning himself in the plain beneath!

Religion a Failure Unless Spiritual. (3) *Nothing but spiritual religion can overcome the power of the flesh.* What is idolatry? It is not a rudimentary knowledge of God, but the recoil from spiritual religion. You might think that the idolater had never known God, and therefore made a piece of wood or stone to represent Him; but that is a wrong conception, and contrary to experience. The whole testimony of the Bible is that the idolater may be one who has known God, as St. Paul clearly shows in Rom. i. 21, R.V.—"Knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened." It is clear also from this story that the people knew God. They had seen His blazing glory and heard His voice on Sinai, yet they made this calf. In fact, the conception of the Deity set before them by Moses had been so spiritual that the effort had been too great for these sensuous people to realise his high ideals. Had

they only lived up to them, sin would have been impossible, because their spiritual life would have been kept open to the Spirit of God, and through that union the power of God would have rendered them impervious to temptation. But when Moses was gone, with his restraining presence, there came an almost inevitable rebound. They said, "This spiritual religion is too high, we cannot attain to it. We must have religion, of course; we have no desire to forsake the God of our fathers, but let us lower this high standard set before us by Moses to something we can see and touch, and which appeals to the sense." It is very interesting and remarkable to observe that directly they lowered their religious standard from the spiritual to the sensual, and so intercepted the gracious resisting power of God's Spirit, passion at once asserted itself, and they gave themselves up to the licentious dance, referred to by Herodotus, but which it is impossible to describe in the present day.

The Opportunity of Passion. The reason why so many are overcome by passion is because they refuse to live on the spiritual level with God, and decline to the lower level of sense. The connection between themselves and the Divine Spirit thus becomes choked or cut. None of us need be overcome with inordinate desire, if we would live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and be occupied by the Spirit. If only we would absorb, in living fellowship with the heart of Christ, the spiritual power which is there, no passion, however mighty its fascination, would be able to master the soul. "Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would" (Gal. v. 16, 17, R.V.).

What Idolatry Is. This study of the proclivity of the human heart towards idolatry, i.e. towards something that can be apprehended by the senses as the object of religious worship, is very illuminating. Idolatry is the endeavour to realise by the senses and intellect, that which only reveals itself to the spiritual faculties of the soul. The essence of idolatry is not expressed in the words, "I have no care for God in heaven, these idols therefore shall be my gods," but in the confession, "I know that there is a God in heaven, but the knowledge of Him is too wonderful for me; it is high, and I cannot attain to it; my spiritual sight is dim, and I will make these living embodiments of His being." Had any one suggested that Israel should apostatise from the God of Abraham, they would have stoned him to death.

They had no desire to break the first commandment and to have other gods than Jehovah; but they found the demand of the second commandment too vigorous. They must have an image, a visible representation, an idol (from the Greek *eidōlon*, i.e. something to be seen).

What it is Followed. This explains the idolatry of Judaism and of Romanism, and the tendency among us all to set up certain habits and forms, certain views and creeds, the affirmation of schools of thought and the fashion of a church-set, as the *fetich* of the religious life. We do not presume to live without God, but we are glad to substitute any intellectual or physical alternative for the worship of God in spirit and in truth. It is easy to reduce our spiritual life from the high spiritual level of Jesus to a mere habit of thought or action, which costs no effort, soothes our consciences, and has the appearance of godliness whilst denying the power. The faith that sees God demands a pure and holy soul, but where this is too heavy a toll to pay, we invent a method of our own, which gives us a religion after a fashion, and winks at practices which the Eternal Light could not tolerate. The advantage of an idol is, that we can take it with us, as Rachel hid her father's teraphim. But God will not go our way: if we want Him, we must go His.

The Prophet and the Priest. In the distinction between Moses and Aaron, we have an illustration of the contrast between the prophet and the priest. The prophet brings the human conscience into the presence of God: the priest negotiates between God and man. The prophet denounces idolatry and tramples its effigies beneath his feet: the priest condones it, in compassion for weak human nature. The prophet is more or less of a revolutionary: the priest, fearful of losing his own position, endeavours to maintain the established course of society. The prophet bears the burdens of the Lord, and is very zealous for His honour: the priest is eager to get in his dues. The prophet ennobles the human spirit by arousing it to hold fellowship with the Father of spirits, whilst the priest is indifferent to its enervation, so long as it turns to himself. Therefore the priesthood, speaking generally, has always stood in the way of freedom, independence, and the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free.

The Senses and the Soul. How remarkable was the act of Moses in forcing the people to drink of the dust of the golden calf (verse 20)! It has been finely said that the world is drinking still of the dust of

its idolatries. The penalty of making an image of God to the sense, instead of seeking God with the spirit, is the destruction of all the nobler attributes of the soul. "They that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them," was a true witness that the prophet made concerning idols and idol-makers. The connection between idolatry and the grossest sensuality is proverbial; and the reason is apparent. Directly you allow the senses to take possession of the soul, they paralyse its resistance, they make havoc of its will.

The Divine Answer to Human Need. From the idol which man's fancy has imagined and his hands fashioned, let us turn thankfully to the divine answer to the human heart, in its appeal for some visible, tangible form, which human eyes have seen and hands have handled. The passionate cry of the ages was uttered through the lips of Philip when he said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us"; and Jesus answered, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." The manufactories that turn out images of the Virgin and of the saints would soon be deserted of their workpeople, if men would realise that the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus. Men have thought that the Eternal God has mocked their yearnings and despised their cries, and have invented for themselves images and ikons, which have borne a tender, sympathising, and pitiful aspect. These, they have said, are our gods. But are they not guilty of the very sin which disgraced the lower slopes of Sinai? As Israel turned from the splendours of Sinai to fashion the calf, and found that the end of those things was death, so of still sorer judgment are those worthy who turn away from God in Christ, imagining that a woman would have more tenderness than He has, and that to touch the hem of His garment is to be preferred to the radiant bliss of the fellowship which John enjoyed on His breast.

"Who is on the Lord's Side?" On Moses reaching the camp, he did three things: (1) He destroyed the calf; (2) He remonstrated with Aaron; (3) He took his station at the main gate of the camp and cried: "Who is on Jehovah's side? Here to me." He could not endure that the Amalekite tribes, that probably were peering down from the cliffs on the naked orgies of the people, should not also behold the condign justice and judgment with which the Almighty would avenge them. At all costs the unseemly revel must be stopped. He gave orders therefore to the faithful band that gathered to his call to go in and out throughout the camp, visiting the whole of it, and slaying, if necessary, every man, even his son or his brother.

He told them that their zeal in this matter would secure consecration: "Consecrate yourselves this day unto the Lord, that He may bestow a blessing upon you." This act on the part of the Levites secured for them the priesthood; and long after it was said of the tribe: "My covenant was with them of life and peace. The law of truth was in his mouth, and he did turn many away from iniquity."

A Call Even Now. But is not this clarion call still ringing: "Who is on the Lord's side?" Was there ever a time when stalwarts like these were in greater demand? We have to hold God's truth against many idols which are placed in competition with it. Idols of the tribe, of the forum, and of the heart. But before we can hope to cope with the heresies and superstitions of our age, we must turn the sword in against ourselves. "Little children, keep *yourselves* from idols," is very pertinent advice. Whilst condemning others, let us see to it that no mote or beam is in our own eyes. Do we know what it is to worship God in the Spirit, to glory in Christ Jesus, and to have no confidence in the flesh? Have we, with Jacob, put away the strange gods of our souls, i.e. all that detracts from our face-to-face fellowship with God? Have we purified ourselves from all filthiness of the spirit as well as of the flesh? Have we put off the garment of the old man, and put on the new man, which is created in the image of God? Then will be fulfilled for us the magnificent blessing where-with Moses, the man of God, blessed Levi before his death:

"Thy Thummim and Thy Urim are
with Thy godly one, . . .
Who said of his father, and of his mother,
I have not seen him;
Neither did he acknowledge his brethren.
Nor knew he his own children: . . .
They shall teach Jacob Thy judgments,
And Israel Thy law:
They shall put incense before Thee,
And whole burnt offering upon
Thine altar."

(Deut. xxxiii. 8-10, R.V.)

XXII

THE FOURFOLD INTERCESSION OF MOSES

EXODUS xxxii. 7-14, 30-35

7. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*:

8. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

9. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiff-necked people:

10. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

11. And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

12. Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

13. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your 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.

14. And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

30. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

31. And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

32. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

33. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

34. Therefore now go, lead the people unto *the place* of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

35. And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

XXII

THE FOURFOLD INTERCESSION OF MOSES

EXODUS xxxii. 7-14, 30-35

The Divine Care. Barely three months had passed since the people had made the transit through the Red Sea, and every hour of that period had been marked by evidences of the Divine care. For them the table in the wilderness had been spread; for them the waters had gushed out pellucid and crystal from the rocks; for them the fleecy cloud, the cumulus cloud, slowly advanced across the sky, and spread its fleecy folds over them; shading them from the heat by day, whilst at night its lambent flame shone over the camp. Even now, where rose the sheer cliff of Sinai, the Presence-Cloud was brooding filled with light and glory.

The People's Folly. But notwithstanding this, and their protestations that they would serve God only and keep His law, they demanded the outward semblance of Deity, violating not the first commandment—for they never intended to renounce Jehovah—but the second; and demanding to worship the Almighty under the form of some creation of their hand. Not only had they made this image, probably after the fashion of Assyria, where their forefathers had dwelt, but had worshipped and circled around it in dances too terrible to describe. Moses felt keenly the sin and shame of their action, of which he first heard from the lips of the Almighty Himself, and realised that nothing could prevent, so far as human thought went, the infliction of a dire penalty upon the people whom he loved. He expected that penalty to fall inevitably, *first*, because of the righteousness of the Divine Nature, *secondly*, because of the inviolability of God's Word, and *thirdly*, because of the transcendence and sublime significance of the ten commandments, which had just been committed to his charge.

The Fear of Moses. Moses feared that the penalty might befall in either or all of these ways. Their sin might lead to their absolute destruction, so that their very existence would be obliterated: or

it would certainly exclude them from that protection, which seemed absolutely necessary as they descended into the valleys of the wilderness: or even, if they were divinely protected, they must forfeit the unique privilege and honour of the Divine Presence: or the covenant, which had been broken by their sin, would never be renewed.

It was as though Israel had bound themselves by four strong knotted cords; from which they could not free themselves; and it remained for him, therefore, to untie them by his personal efforts.

—**His Position.** Our Lord said on one occasion, that what His people loosed on earth should be loosed in heaven; and here is an instance in which a man of God succeeded in unpicking the hard and difficult circumstances around which a nation lay gasping, like the monarch of the forest in the hunter's net. He appears, in the first instance, to have feared that he would have difficulty in bringing God to look at the matter as he did. On the one hand, if eternal justice did not punish this sin, surely the giving of the Law would have been absolutely useless. If the penalties were not insisted on, perhaps the promises would not be kept. Besides, God might appear to wink at sin. On the other hand, if the heavy hand of judgment fell, and the dust of the people mingled with the sands of the desert, the Egyptians would laugh derisively and say that Jehovah had now discovered, what they had learnt long before, that the people were absolutely worthless, good for nothing but to be treated as slaves. This faithful soul, therefore, stood between two cross-currents that met at his feet. But how greatly he misconceived of God!

The Entreaty of Moses. As we read the narrative, it would almost appear as though Moses were pressing God to retreat step by step, and yield to his importunity; but, in point of fact, God was only drawing him on to comprehend the love and grace of His character. It is as though the mother, when teaching her nursling to walk, were to retire backward, as though pushed by his tiny hands, whereas, in point of fact, she is teaching him, unconsciously to himself, to walk. Our Father is so intent on leading us to advance, that He appears to yield to our importunity. "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." There are two instances of this in Scripture. The one, where the God of Abraham appeared to retreat before His servant's fervour for Sodom; the other, where Jesus appeared to yield to the woman of Syrophenicia. In each case the suppliant was led to assume a position of appropriating faith

that had never before been reached, like the furthest wave of an advancing tide, flung far forward up the shore. This is the secret of delayed prayer. Prayer is educative. A man who prays grows; and the muscles of the soul swell from thin whiplash to iron bands.

Four Agonies of Moses. It is to be noticed that before each of the four following agonies (in the strict sense of that term), Moses passed through a deep spiritual experience, which served as a prelude to what followed. He refused the suggestion to be made the father of a great nation (verse 10); he came to the conclusion that he would offer himself as a sacrifice (verse 30); he told His Almighty Friend that he positively dared not adventure the journey alone (xxxiii. 15); and finally he beheld His glory, or at least the rear-guard of that glory, as the procession swept down the mountain gorge (xxxiv. 6). Whenever you are summoned to pass through some profound experience, you may be absolutely assured that you will become endued with additional spiritual power, so that this transcendent experience acts in two ways. Before we can take a new advance in the school of prayer and intercession for others, there has to be a fresh and deeper work experienced in ourselves; and, vice versa, such work, wherever experienced, will be followed by a new power in our dealings with God. Moses' *first* effort was to secure that the people should not be destroyed. His *second* effort was to secure that their sin, which seemed unpardonable, should be forgiven. His *third* effort was to secure that not the angel, but God Himself, should continue to go with them. His *fourth* effort was that God would restore the Covenant which bound Him to His recreant and rebellious nation. In each of these efforts he was abundantly successful.

(1) *Would their sin compel God to destroy and blot them out?* Whilst Moses was considering that possibility, the thought was suggested to his mind, whether it would not, after all, be better, that the people, who were a stiff-necked people, rebellious and blind, should be destroyed, and that out of his own family and beneath his own tutelage, a new young, fresh, God-fearing nation might originate. "The Lord said unto Moses, I have seen these people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation" (verses 9, 10, R.V.). This suggestion must be classed with a similar statement in the Book of Genesis: "It came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Here am I.

And He said unto him, Take now thy son . . . whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering" (Gen. xxii. 1, 2, R.V.). It was never intended by the Almighty that Isaac should be offered, but Abraham had the opportunity of proving that he loved his God as much as any of the surrounding peoples did theirs, and was ready to make all sacrifices on His behalf. There was no intention to destroy Israel, but the suggestion was allowed to come, to reveal him to himself. So, after fasting for forty days, our Lord was tempted to use His divine power to make stones into bread, to stay the cravings of His hunger.

The Offer to Moses Put Aside. But Moses would have none of it. He had left the home of Pharaoh's daughter, to identify himself with this people; and now, though they had turned from him, he would not abandon them, but wove the bond of affinity between them and him tighter than ever. He desired no independent existence, he wanted no glory for himself; their lot should be his lot, their destiny his destiny, and he would stand or fall with the people of his birth. That was a supreme and necessary decision. Before ever we can pray for people and deliver them, we must identify ourselves with them. We must feel our oneness with them, afflicted with their afflictions, and touched with their infirmities. We must share their sorrows, and even bear their sin. When Moses had put aside all thought of his own ambition, and had definitely associated himself with the fortunes of his people, he was able to look God in the face and say: "Father, Thou canst not destroy them; and there are three reasons why Thou canst not. First, Thou hast done so much for them with Thy mighty power and outstretched arm that Thou canst not contradict all Thy previous attitude. Second, if Thou shalt destroy them, the Egyptians will deride Thee, and Thou canst not do it for Thy own honour's sake. Third, if Thou should destroy them, where is Thy covenant with their fathers, to whom Thou hast pledged Thyself to bring their children into the land of promise?"

The Pleading of Humble Souls. Such is the manner in which, in all humility, great souls plead with God; they take their stand upon His promises, and, so to speak, argue the case with Him. It is a wonderful thing when a man dares to say, "Father, Thou canst not help blessing us; we hold Thee to thy Word. Thou canst not fail us, because Thou canst not deny Thyself." When a man can speak to God like that, it seems as though he cannot be gainsayed. It is as though God answers him saying: "Ask me of things to come,

and concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me." We are also reminded of those words of our Lord: "He shall have whatsoever he saith." The Lord repented of the evil which He said He would do unto His people. In the seventh verse, God says to Moses, *Thy* people: in the eleventh verse Moses says to God, *Thy* people: and there they are left. They are His people and the sheep of His pasture. God acted as though He repented; but, really, Moses had obtained a new and deeper vision of His nature.

(2) *Could their sin be forgiven?* We have seen the wrath with which Moses entered the camp. The broken tables of the law; the dust of the idol mingled with the water that descended from the Mount; and the corpses that strewed the passages of the encampment, all proved the heat of his hot indignation. But if he felt like that, what might not God be feeling in His high heaven! Had they not committed the unpardonable sin, for which there is no forgiveness in this world, or the next? Would the blood of bulls and goats ever suffice to take away their sin?

The Plea and Offer of Moses. The next morning there came the awful reaction. The thunder-storm had broken in a shower of rain. Moses said: "My people, you have sinned a great sin; peradventure I will make an atonement for it." During the forty days which had preceded he had been talking with God a good deal about atonement, for all these chapters are filled with the Divine prescriptions regarding atonement; and whilst he lay sleepless all night in his tent, the first and only consideration with him was, whether he could not prevail with God to accept him as a sacrifice on behalf of the guilty nation. It was a noble resolve. We recall those great words of one who seemed to be the Lawgiver of the Church, as Moses was Lawgiver to the nation: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Ghost, that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake" (Rom. ix. 1-3, R.V.). Yes, and a greater than either said, "This is My blood, shed for many, for the remission of sins." So he climbed the well-worn mountain path, and stood again before the Lord, and said: "My people have sinned a great sin. Yet, if Thou wilt forgive their sin——" and then came a pause. It was an unfinished sentence, broken by the extremity of the emotion that boiled within. Can we finish the sentence? "If Thou wilt forgive, then Thou wilt reveal

Thy noblest attribute; if Thou wilt forgive, my tongue shall sing Thy praise as long as I live; if Thou wilt forgive, Thou wilt bind the people to Thine heart for ever. But, if not without blood, and if that of beasts does not avail, may I not be their atonement,—blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written, out of the Book of Life, out of the book of eternal blessedness; blot it out. Take *me*, if only Thou wilt spare them."

A Greater Propitiation Prepared. The Almighty did not fully answer that challenge, because He saw across the plains of time the upreared cross on which, in the person of His Lord, He would make reconciliation for the sins of the people. Him would God set forth to be a propitiation, to show His righteousness, in the passing over of sins done aforetime. Every man, was the reply, must stand for his own sin. Moses could not make an atonement, because he was himself a sinner, and no sinful mortal can make an atonement for his brother. "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book." But, in virtue of the true mercy-seat, and the love that was to give Christ to the cross, forgiveness was granted, and Moses was bidden to lead the people to the land of promise, with the promise that God's Angel should go before them. Thus Moses knew that his second prayer was answered.

(3) *There was the further question of the escort.* He knew that the people were forgiven, but it hurt him to hear that an Angel was to be deputed to accompany them. The burden of two-and-a-half million of people was too heavy for him to carry, even with Angel-help. What though the desert gorges were glowing with the flame-cloud, and an angel-escort accompanied the march, he could never rest until he had secured the Divine presence. He must secure somehow the withdrawal of that sentence, "I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people." He spoke of it to the people, who awoke to realise what they were forfeiting, and to show their penitence, divested themselves of their adornments. It is supposed, indeed, that from this time and onward they discontinued the use of adornments, as evidence of their contrition for their apostacy. Moses, however, felt that nothing but prayer would obtain the reversal of the sentence. He could not be always ascending Sinai. The camp needed his superintending care, and as there was as yet no dedicated shrine, he probably took his own tent, and erected it outside the camp, as a temporary meeting-place between God and all faithful souls. Thither he went himself, and

we are told that when Moses went out unto the tent, every man stood at his tent-door, and looked after his retreating person. They said, "He is going in to pray for us;" and when the curtain fell behind him, the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tent, and God talked with Moses face to face, as a man talks to his friend. So soon as he found himself alone with God, he said, "Let Thy Presence go with me, I beseech Thee. If Thou dost not go with me, I cannot go. Angels are not enough; they are fair and sweet and strong, but I want Thee. I cannot go unless Thou shalt go. Wilt Thou leave me, a lone man, to thread this desert with this people? Thou hast put the burden upon me, and am I to stand by myself and bear it all? I cannot go without Thy pledged Presence." Ah, it is good when a man gets to close grips with God. "And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name. . . . My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (xxx. 17).

(4) *There was the Question of the Broken Covenant.* Ah! Those broken pieces of the tables of stone, splintered yonder at the mountain foot, which he had cast down in his hot anger! They were emblems of the broken covenant, could he get it reknit? He said, "Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory. Grant to me to see Thy face." And God said, "Prepare two tables of stone." What did that mean? With what a beating heart did Moses hew those tables from the rock with his own hands! Never before had he engaged in such sacred toil as the fellow-worker of God. Bearing them carefully in his hands, he ascended once again the mountain, and the Lord descended, and stood with him there, and proclaimed his name. "Abide here in this place!" So it seemed to him that God arranged it. Then the shadow of God's hand fell on him. He saw nothing, but heard the measured beat of the wings of the seraphim, as they passed in harnessed bands down the mountain gorge. He heard also the harpers harping upon their harps. He heard also the voice of the Eternal proclaiming the attributes of His character, the first of which quieted for ever his forebodings. Then, as the cortège was passing away, he could have gazed and gazed, but, forgetting his eager desire to see God's glory, he made haste and bowed his head, and worshipped, and gave himself to intercession. Let my Lord go in the midst of us, and pardon our iniquity and sin, and take us for Thine own inheritance. And this was the divine reply "Behold, I will make a covenant, before all thy people I will do

marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth, nor in any nation" (xxxiv. 10). To this was added the return of the Tables of Stone, not now blank, but covered, as the others had been, with the divine script. Then Moses knew that the sin of his people was put away for ever, and that they were taken back into their olden place.

XXIII

“ALONE, YET NOT ALONE”

EXODUS xxxiii. 12-17

12. And Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.

13. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation *is* thy people.

14. And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest.

15. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence.

16. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? *is it* not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth.

17. And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

XXIII

“ALONE, YET NOT ALONE”

EXODUS xxxiii. 12-17

The Leader and His Helper. After Israel had sinned in making the golden calf, there was evidently an alteration in the Divine purpose and promise; for God said, “Now lead *thou* the people to the land that I have promised; nevertheless, I will send an angel with thee”—meaning that Moses was to assume the responsibility of leadership, and that there would be a convoy of angels, but that the Divine presence of the Jehovah-Angel would be withdrawn.

As we can well understand, this withdrawal filled the heart of Moses with extreme dismay, and in this, the third of his intercessions—for we remember that there were four—in which he thought that he was pressing God back, though in fact God was drawing him on, he entreats that God would graciously return to His earlier promise, and that He would accompany His people’s pilgrimage in person. In answer to this prayer, he obtained the promise—“My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”

The Solitariness of Moses. *The urgency of his request. There was the sense of absolute aloneness.* The loneliness of the crowd is more terrible than of perfect solitude, and though Moses was within reach of Aaron, Miriam, Zipporah, Caleb, Joshua, and the seventy elders, who were prepared to share the burden of government, yet he was absolutely lonely, because his spiritual life and ideals were so much loftier than theirs. Who was there that could understand him when he spoke of secrets into which angels cannot pry? Had he not entered within the veil, and talked with the King of kings? It has been suggested that he was the loneliest of men—more lonely than Elijah, when he thought himself the survivor of the prophets; than Paul, when all men forsook him in his old age, standing at Nero’s bar; than Luther in conflict with the Papacy; than Columbus breaking into unknown seas. Only our Lord has trodden a lonelier path, because He was led out as a scapegoat into the wilderness.

The Untrodden Way Ahead. *Before him lay an unknown path.* Thus far the ground they had trodden was perfectly familiar to him. He had often visited those mountain solitudes with his flock. It was there that the burning bush had flamed before his gaze. All the wild ravines, and all the green pastures were as familiar to him as the survivors of our homes. But from the moment they left Sinai for Kadesh-barnea their path would lie through unknown deserts, and be beset by daring and experienced foes. It was a prospect before which the stoutest might quake. If God were with him, not merely in His chariot of cloud, but as Companion and Friend, he would have no fear; but otherwise "carry us not up hence."

The Responsibility of Leadership. They were always turning back to Egypt. Can you not understand them in this, finding the clue to their behaviour in your own soul? You may have been brought out of the slavish tasks and heavy tyranny of the taskmaster, into a free and bracing air. You have caught the gleam of a fairer day, and heard the challenge of a nobler age. You have gained power from Christ to master the world, the flesh, and the devil. It has seemed in your brief hours of triumph, that Egypt will never again fascinate or allure; and then, without the least provocation or warning, so far as you know, you feel the old longings arise and the old appetites pulling you back. You cannot forsake your companions, you cannot face Gethsemane, you cannot endure the Cross and despise the shame. It was a people who experienced these backward-drawings of the tide more keenly than any other, and who were always erring in their heart, that the great lawgiver had to carry, as a nursing father carries a sick child, to the Land of Promise.

The Yearning for Rest. We all know this. Few are the hands that do not tug at oars too long in their sweep! Few are the eyes that do not watch eagerly for the westering sun! Few are the hearts that do not repeat to themselves the old refrain, of the place where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. Everyone cherishes the hope of a rest-time before he goes hence, where love shall wait on him, and soft breezes shall fan him, and the sounds of Nature shall be his lullaby. Offer a man the choice between vast wealth, supreme glory and accomplished ambitions, on the one hand, and on the other rest, in which his nature shall be anchored in perfect safety, shelter, and equilibrium; the choice will be for *rest*,

or for those other conditions, if they will only guarantee a calm alcove or haven, where the wild winds shall cease to blow, and the waves shall only break in ripples on the sand. Such was the cry of this strong and noble nature.

And So the Need of God. For all these reasons the servant felt that he must have the Master with him. So great was their pressure, that he felt more than ever impelled to plead with God, and to say, “My God, we have come to this, Thou and I: if Thou dost require this work of me, Thou must Thyself accompany me. Be my Presence-Chamber, allow me to live in Thy secret place; I must have that comradeship, that companionship, that intimacy which one who is called to do work like mine requires, or he will die. If Thy presence go not with me, not the presence of an angel, however fair and glorious his face; not the presence of even a squadron of angels, however carefully they might keep watch and ward around the host by day and night; not even the cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night will suffice—I must have *Thee*.”

O pilgrim of the night! O child, stepping out into the waste of untrodden ways that lie before thee, canst thou not appreciate this, and hast thou not often cried aloud after the same fashion?

The Response of God. *The graciousness of the Response.* “My Presence shall go with thee.” “Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end.” We are full of presentiments. There is the presentiment of some sudden catastrophe, that may overtake our homes or ourselves. We say to ourselves, as we look into dear faces, “We must take care, whilst we have time, to keep their eyes from tears, and dimple their cheeks with laughter.” There is the presentiment of change, when we may be wrested from what we love and cling to, and have to go out into an unknown land. There is the dread of growing old, with its loss of the quick interests of youth and middle age. But we must not linger in this chamber of our soul, “living with pain and dreams.” Let us go forth to stand in His Presence, where there is fulness of joy. God kept His word with Moses. His pavilion was the cloud; but nearer than cloud or light was the enwrapping sense of His nearness. Never an anxiety which was not poured into His ear and lovingly shared: never an emergency, which He did not meet: never an appeal, that before it was uttered was not anticipated. If you have had a kind and wealthy friend, whose one thought is to make life easier and happier for you, and will multiply that Friend a million times, you will then have

some poor scintillation, of how the soul fares who travels in the Divine Convoy.

God, "Exceeding Abundantly." When our Lord spoke of yielding to the importunity of our friends, He said, that if a man asked for a coat, we were to give him our cloak also; and that if we were compelled to go one mile, we were to travel two. Would the Master lay down that law, and not fulfil its obligations? If, then, we ask Him to go with us on our journey to Heaven, carrying our burdens and providing for our needs, will He do this, and only this? He will assuredly see us home, but He will do exceeding abundantly. Listen: He added to His answer to Moses' request, a clause which met his unuttered desire,—**"I will give you rest."** Moses only asked God to go with him, but He said, **"I will do exceeding abundantly, I will secure you from all wearing anxiety, I will take the lines from your forehead, I will give you rest."**

There are some presences which you would like to have beside you when you come to die. The step is so soft, the touch so gentle, the heart so warm. But, O Lord Jesus, if Thou shalt be with us when we leave the valley for the stream, there shall breathe through our chamber and heart the Rest of a summer sunset, when the distant bells ring in the mellow air, and the glory lies on the hills.

THE CLEFT OF THE ROCK

EXODUS xxxiii. 18—xxxiv. 27

18. And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

19. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

20. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

21. And the Lord said, Behold *there is* a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

22. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:

23. And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

1. And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon *these* tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.

2. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount.

3. And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.

4. And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up into mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.

5. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.

6. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

7. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

8. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

9. And he 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 stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

10. And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou *art* shall see the work of the Lord: for it *is* a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

11. Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

12. Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

13. But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:

14. For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God:

15. Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go to a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and *one* call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice;

16. And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

17. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

18. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt.

19. All that openeth the matrix *is* mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, *whether* ox or sheep, *that is* male.

20. But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem *him* not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the first born of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.

21. Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest.

22. And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

23. Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel.

24. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.

25. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning.

26. The first of the first fruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

27. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.

XXIV

THE CLEFT OF THE ROCK

EXODUS xxxiii. 18—xxxiv. 27

The Desire for Deeper Intimacy with God. Moses was the spokesman of humanity when he said, in the rapture of fellowship with God, "Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory." For twice forty days he had been within the cloud, the earthliness of his nature had been refined, and his whole being was imbued with the light and love of God. But much will have more! The holiest of God's saints are those who press nearer and ever nearer into His secret fellowship, in order that they may be satisfied with the vision of His face. We hardly know all that Moses meant when he uttered this prayer, but he must have been under the influence of a similar impulse to that which led Philip to cry—"Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." What a contrast is wrought in the heart of man through fellowship with God! When first the vision of infinite purity breaks upon us, we cry with Peter, "Depart, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"; but when once we have been brought into union and fellowship with the Eternal, our thirst for God becomes insatiable, and with the patriarch at the close of his night wrestle, we cry, "Tell me Thy name."

God's Answer. There was infinite tenderness in the Lord's proposal that Moses should stand in the cleft of the rock, lest the burning splendour should overpower him. Does not God draw nigh the soul still, and speak in similar words? When bereavement befalls us, and the light of our eyes is removed, and a shadow falls over all the world, may we not hear Him saying, "Behold, there is a place by Me. I have put thee in this cleft of the rock, and am covering thee with My hand." When our heart is disappointed in human affection, and it appears as though all faith in our fellows is shattered; when we find that the deposit that we placed in the bank of human love is forfeited, and when our soul prefers death to life, again we hear that strong and tender voice saying, "Behold, there is a place

by Me. I have put thee in this cloven rock, and will cover thee with My hand." When we are threatened with the loss of our early faith, and no longer believe with the unquestioning simplicity of our childhood; when imperious questions arise and demand answer, again the Father draws nigh His child, and says, "My child, thou canst not understand, but come nearer to Me; there is a place by Me, the full splendour of My Glory cannot be beheld by mortal vision, but I will put thee in the cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand." The hand covers only for so long as we are unable to bear the revelation, but it is removed so soon as the tempered glory will not be too strong for us.

The Cleft in the Rock. The mention of the *cleft* in the rock reminds us of the tempest, earthquake, and glacier action which have torn the mountains and cleft great gashes in their sides, and we turn from these to Christ, the Rock of Ages who was cleft for us. We understand that if we hide in His riven side, where the spear rent Him, we are sheltered for ever, at infinite cost to Him. We look out upon God from the place which is called Calvary; we stand upon the Rock of the finished work of the Redeemer; we are hidden beneath the pierced hand, and from that vantage-point are able to see things that prophets and kings desired to see in vain.

The Mercy of God Discovered. When God made known His name to Moses, it became clear how close the affinity had become between the mortal and Eternal. There must have been a previous understanding of the tender love of God on the part of Moses, though it surpasses our knowledge as to whence he derived it. He had beheld the terrors of the Exodus, the ten plagues, the overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, and the penalty paid by Israel for the fashioning of the golden calf; and yet he was prepared to understand, as few even since Pentecost have understood, the Divine grace and compassion. We do not wonder that David, amid the pastoral scenes of Bethlehem, with its flowing brooks and green verdure, and the soft breath of summer air around him, should have sung of the shepherd-care of God, and of the goodness and mercy which followed him all the days. The surroundings in which he spent those happy years of his boyhood predisposed him to gentle thoughts of the Almighty; but for Moses there were only the splintered peaks, the burning sand, and cloudless expanse of sky. There was nothing in the brooding cloud, or flashing lightning, or trembling earth to stimulate the sense of loving kindness and tender mercy. Yet Moses seems to have come

to the very same discovery of God as John did, after being trained in the inner secret of Christ's love, and they reached hands across the centuries—Moses the shepherd of Israel and John the disciple whom Jesus loved—saying, "God is Love."

The Scene of the Discovery. It must have been a very memorable one. Perhaps Israel gathered to see the great Lawgiver, as he rose up early in the morning and again ascended the mountain, as the Lord had commanded him. On this occasion not even Joshua was permitted to accompany him. No man might come up with him, neither might any man be seen on any part of the mount; even the flocks and herds were driven down into the valley. Before the sun had risen far above the horizon, and when the shadows fell far across the valley from the mighty shapes of the mountains, that figure was seen ascending slowly, reverently; and as we think of Moses and the mountain, it seems as though the mountain itself were dwarfed to insignificance, and had become but as a pedestal upon which the feet of this mighty man of God rested. Of the two Moses was greater than the mountain, and through all after-time even Sinai is chiefly memorable because of its association with his glorious character. Years before, as a lonely man, he had stood before the burning bush, where the Shechinah of God gleamed out and shone with a supernatural brilliance, but now there was to be an even greater theophany.

God's Children in the Mountains with Him. God is always calling us into His mountains. Ruskin says that the mountains serve three great offices, in order to preserve the health and increase the happiness of mankind. Their first use is to give motion to water. Every fountain and river, from the streamlet that crosses the village lane to the silent march of the multitudes of waters in the rivers, owe their existence to the mountain ranges. Next to this there is the important function of the mountains in constantly changing the currents of the air, moistening it with the spray of waterfalls, aerating it as the mountain peaks catch and reflect it, and ultimately sending it forth, cool, fraught with ozone, refreshed and quickened, to replace the exhausted air of mighty cities. The third great use of these immense natural altars is to cause perpetual change in the soil of the earth—the highest summits being crumbled into fragments and pulverised, broken by frosts and ground by torrents, so that materials are produced which are distributed by the streams further and further from the mountain's base. The turbid, foaming water bears some appointed burden of soil to enrich the valleys. Thus

the desolate and threatening ranges of mountain, which have often filled men's hearts with terror, are found to be replete with beneficence for the wealth of human life. We all need to tread these great mountains. It is only as we climb them that we can see the glory of God in Nature.

The Messages of the Mountains. If you have never climbed the mountains and stood amid the snows, and watched the sunset or sunrise, or been awed by the awful silence, or felt yourself an infinitesimal atom amid the old wrinkled hills, you can hardly realise how deeply they speak to the heart of man, and dwarf to insignificance the objects which he pursues with so much fever, and even the sorrows that threaten his heart. And yet for all of us there are mountains of vision, of fellowship with God, whose pinnacles lift us into union, whose snows rebuke our uncleanness, whose everlasting strength gives us stability. There is Horeb, with its still small voice; and Carmel, crowned with its altar; and Pisgah, with its far-reaching view; and Hermon, with the memory of the Transfigured Christ. Ascend these in thought and prayer! See the mighty rivers rising from their slopes, breathe the fresh air baptized and quickened, adore the Hand which is constantly shedding the grit of the mountains to recruit the exhausted energies of the soil, and transform those lessons into the bread of your spirit. But if these conceptions of the magnificence and might of the Creator are too great for the soul's naked vision, then ask that you may be placed in the cleft of the rock, so that only the tempered after-glow of the Divine Nature may be seen.

The Revelation of the Name of God. "Merciful." The Hebrew word means "tenderly pitiful." With man there are crimes that need to be punished, there is justice that must be administered, there is conviction that must be wrought deep, and harrowed in by the Spirit of God. But men and women need not only judgment and justice, penalty and conviction, but tender pity, for so much of wrong is due to ignorance, to inherited passion, to mistake, to blindness and darkness, to waywardness, fickleness, and changeableness. Humanity, like a half-grown idiot, stumbles on, blind and dull and stupid, crying out for help, weeping in the dark night, groping its way; and it needs something more than the strong hand of justice—not punishment only, but pity; not correction only, but sympathy—a High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. It is a very sweet and beautiful thing that, amid all the

sins of Moses' life, he spoke of God in the first place, and God spoke to him of His tender pitifulness. It is like the mist with which God waters the early grass. The torrent of rain would oppress vegetation, but Shakespeare speaks of "the gentle rain that droppeth from heaven upon that which is beneath." We place the globe of glass upon the delicate plant, that the mist which gathers upon it may sufficiently moisten it, so the distilling dew of God's gentleness upon the tender herbage is here manifested. In this very paragraph we have the command that no kid shall be seethed in its mother's milk, probably because the accumulation of milk when the kid had been taken away would be harmful to the mother, therefore there is the provision, three times revealed in the Pentateuch that the kid should remain with its mother until it was weaned and able to feed itself. Oh, the tenderness of God, that does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the tiny spark, the smouldering flax! That is the first thought given by God amid the granite of Sinai. Do not be afraid of Him. He is merciful—as a father pitieth his little dwarfed or crippled child, "so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

—**Gracious.** But we are told in addition that He is "*Gracious.*" That word has gone out of fashion. Our fathers petrified it; they made it the foundation-stone of a structure of granite, in which the souls of men could find no rest, and therefore we rather dread that word—Grace. And yet there is no greater word in language than the word that stands for the undeserved, free gift of the Love of God. "Nothing in my hand I bring"—that must be the plea of each one of us; we are saved by grace, not our tears, not our prayers, not our feelings. Nothing of good in us has attracted God to us; He loves us because He will love us, and when once He has set His love upon us because He would, He will not withdraw it; but, in spite of our sin, our wandering, our waywardness, He who loved us because He would, will continue to love us because He will. He causes His sun to shine upon the evil as well as upon the good; He sends His rain upon the unjust as well as the just—upon the man or woman who like a barren patch has yielded only thorns to the hand which has nurtured and loved, and yearns to save it, in spite of all.

—**Long-suffering.** God is not only merciful and gracious, He is "*Longsuffering.*" We read in 1 Corinthians xiii. that "Love suffereth long, and is kind; is not easily provoked." You have thought that your sin has cut off the mercy of God—but He is not easily provoked;

you have thought that your waywardness has shut up for evermore His tender mercy—but He waits to be gracious. Just as the husband-man waits for long months until the result of his patient culture shall appear, so does God wait, and will not weary. Moses thought that his prayer had averted God's wrath, but God desired to undeceive him, and to show that his pleading had been anticipated, and was only the reflection of the longsuffering that had waited through the ages to be manifested to the sons of men. You think you have worn out God's patience, but it would take a greater sinner than you to do that. Indeed, it is impossible to exhaust the patience of God. He beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things, His love never faileth. The Lord God, tenderly pitiful, gracious, and longsuffering.

—**Plenteous in Goodness and Truth.** That word truth is not veracity, but *troth*,—the word used by the man to the woman and the woman to the man in the marriage ceremony—"I plight thee my troth." "O soul, thou canst not reckon upon thyself, but reckon upon God, for He is plenteous in troth; He will not run back; He will not fail, who hast led thee to trust Him; He will not let His faithfulness fail. Reckon upon God's faithfulness to thyself and to His promises. Plenteous in goodness! We can never see its horizon. When He makes stars, He strews them in plentitude upon the Milky Way; He scatters spring flowers with both hands. When He makes beauty, He does it so profusely that there is loveliness everywhere, from the tiniest insect to the glowing seraphim. It reminds us of what Isaiah said—"He will *abundantly* pardon"; and of Paul, who says, "Where sin abounded *grace did much more abound*." The alps of sin are overtopped by these other words—"Forgiveness according to the *riches of His grace*." Oh, that unforgiven and doubting souls might take these words to themselves—"Plenteous in Goodness and Truth."

—**"Forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin."** The prefix "for" is really the intensive—it means much giving. God does not wink at sin, or turn His face from sin, or refuse to notice sin, or gloss over sin; but every time we sin, and come back to Him in true penitence, He comes Himself to undo the result and extract the poison. Giving is forgiving; forgiving is absolute giving. It is as if God gave Himself to us for every sin we commit with a new impress, a new plentitude, with a new purpose of deliverance from the love and power of it. There is nothing more terrible than the way in

which sin clings to a man and dogs his footsteps. Let a man once steal, and he is never trusted again, even though he has made reparation for it. Men look at their fallen brothers through their sin; but God looks at man through the idealised life, with a love that imputes to him every virtue for Christ's sake. A woman sometimes does that with her boy or girl. As long as she can, she will impute to them something wonderful that no one else can see in the child. So God always reckons to us what we are capable of being, and He gives Himself to us in order that we may become that. You shall not be simply forgiven and saved from the results of your sin, but you shall be treated from this very hour as if you had never committed it. You need not be a bird with a broken wing, a woman with a broken heart, whose voice can never again reach its old ringing note. Because God forgives you, He restores you; He puts you back where you were before you fell; He treats you as though you had never fallen; it will never be mentioned or thrown up at you at the judgment seat. No angel in the distant vista of eternity will come across an account book with that debt of yours recorded in it. God has destroyed the account book, there is no record kept, "He remembers it no more." The three words used—"Forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin"—cover every possibility of sin, so that whatever your sin may be denominated, it comes under that category.

—**Just.** But here there comes a dark line—"He will by no means clear the guilty." That, of course, is spoken in mercy both to the individual and to society. He will not clear the individual, He cannot, because unless the guilty man repents, it would not be right to forgive him. You could not be happy if you were not holy; you could not have peace if the wound had not been probed and cleansed to the very heart. David forgave Absalom without his confessing or being penitent for his sin, and he became a rebel, and had to pay the penalty of death on the battlefield. God wants to do sure work, and He cannot clear the guilty unless there is repentance; He cannot clear you except on the basis of the atonement that He Himself has made on the cross.

—**Punishing Sin.** "He visits the sins of the fathers upon the children," in their misshapen bodies and darkened minds. You say, "Is that right?" Ah, but remember that He keeps mercy for thousands—not thousands of individuals, though that is true, but thousands of generations. He mercifully curtails the result of sin to the fourth generation. It is said that, in London, the fifth generation

ceases to propagate itself; that men and women cease to bear children. Surely that is good, for if a family is rotten to the core, and will not repent and turn to God, it is better to let that family die out. The result of sin stops at the fourth generation in mercy. But supposing the child of a drunkard is afflicted with epilepsy—and they often are—that affliction may be the means of saving the child from becoming a drunkard, and, as is the case in homes for these stricken waifs, it may be trained and brought up to know and love Christ. He will by no means clear—we must get right with God, we must become a penitent, we must forsake our sin and seek forgiveness—and it is ours instantly.

The Need of God Perceived. Directly Moses heard this, he fell on his face and worshipped, and said, "I beseech Thee, go with this people, for they are a stiff-necked people." You would have thought that the very fact that they were a stiff-necked people would have been a reason why God should not go with them; but Moses said—"If Thou art a God like that, Thou art the God that stiff-necked people want." We are reminded of those words, "Good and upright is the Lord, *therefore* will He teach sinners in the way." Are you stiff-necked? Here is the God you want—tender, forgiving, strong. Moses said, "Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us"—that is the climax, "Take us, a stiff-necked people, take us for Thine inheritance." He said in effect, "No one else can get aught from people such as we are; but a God like Thou art can. Take us for Thine inheritance." There is not a man or a woman that may not get comfort from this, for God will take a stiff-necked man, an obstinate, self-willed woman—He is equal to every emergency—and though up till now the soul has borne nothing but thorns and thistles, He will get golden harvest out of the barren plot of land. He takes the old tumble-down shanty and remodels it into a palace. He comes and lives in it to transfigure and sanctify. "The Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in a waste howling wilderness; He compassed him about; He cared for him; He kept him as the apple of His eye" (Deut. xxxii. 9, 10, R.V.). "Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord, and the nation that He hath taken for His inheritance."

The Covenant Renewed. "Behold," said Jehovah, "I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth." He promised to drive out the

Amorite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivvite and the Jebusite; but there were conditions which the people must fulfil; and a brief summary is given of the chief points of positive observance which He required, in addition to their obedience to the moral law.

These points may be reduced to twelve: 1. That no treaty of peace should be made with the Canaanites (12). 2. That all their images, altars and groves should be destroyed (13). 3. That there should be no intermarriage between their sons and daughters and those of the heathen (15, 16). 4. That no molten image should be made to represent God (17). 5. That the passover feast should be observed (18). 6. That the firstborn should be dedicated or redeemed (19, 20). 7. That the Sabbath rest should be observed at all times of the year (21). 8. That the feasts of Pentecost and Tabernacles should be maintained regularly (22). 9. That at all the three great festivals all the males should appear before God (23). 10. That no leaven should be used with any sacrifice (25). 11. That the first fruits of all things should be offered to God (26). 12. That no kid should be seethed in its mother's milk (26).

From this we gather generally that whilst God binds Himself by His covenant on the one hand, He expects that we will conform to the highest ideals of Christian faith, and of obedience, in heart and life. It is the obedient, loving soul with whom God dwells in perfect union and for whom He fulfils the abundance of His promises.

XXVI

“HE WIST NOT”

Exodus xxxiv. 29-35; 2. Cor. iii. 18. (R.V.)

29. And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.

30. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

31. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them.

32. And afterwards all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in mount Sinai.

33. And *till* Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

34. But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel *that* which he was commanded.

35. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

18. But we all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

XXVI

“HE WIST NOT”

EXODUS xxxiv. 29-35; 2 Cor. iii. 18 (R.V.)

The Transfigured Face. For forty days, with no sustenance from bread or water, Moses followed hard after the vision of God, absorbed with an eternal passion, not counting the hours, which passed like a dream. He talked with God as a man talks face to face with his friend; all unaware of the marvellous change his fellowship was effecting. At God's dictation, he wrote the Covenant, as we have it in this Book, and finally God gave him the two tables of stone on which He had imprinted His autograph. With these in his hand, Moses, unconscious of what had befallen him, descended to the plain, where the tents of Israel were lying at the foot of the mount. “And when Aaron and all the rulers of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him” (ver. 30).

The Apostle Paul, naturally enough, has laid hold of this thought, for there was a marvellous affinity between Paul and Moses. Their dispensations were different, but the fire that burned within was the same. Paul would have been the Moses of the Decalogue, as Moses would have been the Paul of the Gospel. And laying hold upon this, his ardent spirit delighted in it, and said: “We all have our Sinai, our mount of vision; we, too, stand under the shadow of the hand of God within the niche of the rock, where we behold with unveiled face the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ; and we also are changed into the same image; our faces also should shine, though we wist it not.”

(1) *The Glory of the Human Face Divine.* In this case we use the word *Divine* in the unique sense in which it belongs to Christ. There are many beauties and glories upon the human face. There is the glory of intellectual expression; there is the glory shed forth from the soul of the musician or painter; there is the glory of human love, which every great artist has striven to set forth in the smile

of the Madonna towards the Babe at her breast. There is the glory, too, upon the face of true piety, for indeed in country districts where neither form nor physiognomy were specially cultured or refined, we have seen on very commonplace faces a light which never shone on sea or shore. The face sometimes seems like a rare vase, in which the light shines through the transparent porcelain. But none of these conceptions of the human face and its glory can indicate to us what that glory must have been that shone upon the face of Christ—the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, for the face of Christ was as a mirror in which we see God. In St. Peter's at Rome, one of the rarest paintings is placed so high above the heads of the people, that it is quite impossible to view it, but in the aisle a mirror is placed, in which you can see the picture reflected. So the glory of God shone upon the face that Mary kissed, beaming from His features, as well as from the moral and miraculous radiance of His life.

—**Reflecting Glory of God.** In considering the various ways in which Jesus Christ reflected the glory of God, we must be guided by the vision that Moses had of that glory. It appealed to his moral and spiritual perceptions. Though God is the Maker of all the glory of the universe, we have no picture or painting of His glory as it passed down the ravine. Even inspired lips are dumb when they attempt to describe the lustre of the sapphire throne. The whole stress of the narrative is laid upon the moral attributes of God—"The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,"—the threefold attributes—mercy, truth and justice. So in the face of Christ there shone a revelation of the moral glory of God, and of the supreme dignity of the human soul, when living in union with God.

The Light of Christ on Human Problems. From the face of Jesus has been reflected light upon five great problems. (1) *He shed light upon the problem of the Being of God.* Before that, man had only faintly guessed at God as a Father—"Like as a father pitieth his children"—but Christ taught us that the essential nature of God is Fatherhood; and by the impartation of the spirit of sonship. He established an everlasting relationship between the Father and the human soul that was begotten in His likeness. (2) *Light fell from the face of Christ upon the great problem of sin.* He showed how sin may be discovered, confessed, forgiven, obliterated, and the soul justified and sanctified. He insisted that this was possible for the most vicious and degraded of mankind. Out of the mud He could

make priceless jewels; out of black coal He could extract diamonds. (3) *Light fell upon the problem of human suffering and pain.* Christ showed that when it was borne in submission to the will of God, it became part of His own great atonement, remedial in its operation upon mankind, not to be resented, but borne in patient faith and meekness. (4) *Light also fell upon the problem of the passive virtues.* Beneath His touch humility and meekness, simplicity and forbearance, were proved to be transcendent in their strength and worth, and became eagerly sought after by those who were on the outlook for goodly pearls. (5) *Light fell upon the problem of the future.* Men had guessed that there was a life beyond, but were not sure. Even Moses himself was not certain, but Jesus Christ brought “life and immortality to light.” Just as before the sun rises the landscape contains mountains and hills, rivers and fields, but all are concealed, and the sunrise does not create them, but reveals them; so all truth lay as a panorama before the minds of men, and could not be discerned by the purest and wisest until Christ came as the Sun of Righteousness to reveal it. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ lit up the firmament. “Let there be light, and there was light.” That is what Paul found in Christ, and that is what we may find in Him. God grant that the veil of our passion, of our obtuseness, of our selfishness may be rent, so that we may see the glory of God in the face of our Saviour!

(2) *The Transference of Glory, from the Face of Christ to our Faces.* “We all, with unveiled face beholding [or reflecting] as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image, even as from the Lord the Spirit” (2 Cor. iii, 18, R.V.). Let us look into the deep and exquisite meaning of this verse, which is the pivot, and gives the point of view for the whole paragraph. You need not wait to understand the Greek language before passing an opinion as to whether to adopt the one version or the other. If you quietly read the entire paragraph, you will be convinced, however scant your knowledge of the Greek, that the rendering of the Revised Version is the true one, and for this reason—the Apostle had been showing that the old covenant had a glory all its own; and this, by a quick transition of thought, had led him to remember the veiled face of Moses, behind the veil of which a glory shone of such brilliance that the children of Israel could not behold it. His aim, therefore, was to bring out the contrast between the veiled glory of Moses and the unveiled glory of the Christian Church, and it would

be an altogether unusual and unnatural deviation from his line of thought to say that we, as part of the Church, were beholding "as in a mirror." Moses did not behold in a mirror, Moses saw God *face to face*; and if we beheld God's glory in a mirror, we should be occupying an inferior position to Moses, whereas, the whole gist of the Apostle's argument is that the Christian Church occupies a better.

Christians Reflect the Glory of Christ. Obviously, therefore, in the first place, following the line of argument that the Christian Church is in a superior position to that occupied by Moses, we must surely have as direct a vision as he had, and better. Moses beheld directly; surely, therefore, we do not see in a mirror, but we, too, see face to face.

Then to turn to another point, Moses, so far as he was allowed, reflected the glory of God, and it shone from his face. It would be illogical to turn from the idea of Moses shedding the glory from his face, and to speak of the Church as beholding, bending towards the mirror in which the glory of God shines. To carry out the true conception, surely the Church must equally shed forth the glory of God, as Moses did; the additional point being emphasised, that in the case of Moses the glory was veiled, while in the case of the believer that glory is unveiled; and, with unveiled face, without reserve, we all transmit and shed forth the glory of God. On either of those two lines of argument, we are obliged to adopt the reading of the Revised Version, and to believe that the Apostle urges that Christian people are to make a point of reflecting Jesus; they are to be the mirrors for the purpose of shedding amongst men His glory; and in the effort to do this they become transfigured into His own glorious beauty, from glory to glory.

But whilst that is the obvious line of the Apostle's teaching, it does not altogether do away with the thought suggested by the Authorised Version; because, if we are to reflect, we must first behold, only we do not behold as in a mirror, we behold by direct vision. There must be a vision in our case, as in the case of Moses, if, like him, we are to reflect; we must gaze directly upon the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ without a veil between, if we are to pass on to others that glory which we behold, and, as we do so, become transfigured into His likeness.

All May Do This. *This privilege is open to us all.* "But we *all*." That word denotes the universality of this duty—we *all* have to reflect, we *all* have to shine. No doubt the contrast is suggested from the case of Moses, who, alone of all Israel, was called up to Sinai's

peaks, and allowed to gaze upon God. He went so far as to put fences around the lower parts of the mountain, so that the people were absolutely deterred from advancing. Granted that he took a few of the elders of Israel to one of the lower slopes, and that his servant Joshua accompanied him some way higher, yet none of these saw the glory of God face to face, and none of them reflected it. Moses alone passed up into the very presence of God, and spake with Him as a friend speaketh to his friend.

In this most happy age there is no aristocracy of blessing, there are no fences to serve as a line of demarcation between the mass of people and the elect few. There is no arbitrary selection of this or the other to scale the mountain steeps to catch the rays of the Divine glory: we *all* have the right to direct fellowship with God; we *all* may shed abroad, in the home, in the counting-house, upon the wan and weary faces we meet day by day, something of the glow, the lustre, the splendour of that light that never shone on sea or shore. There is no believer that may not have to-day all the privileges that Moses had. For you the inner secret; for you the face-to-face communion; for you the vision of God. No fences, no barrier, no reserve.

Our Vision and Reflection must be Unveiled. It is important to remember that there are no esoteric doctrines in Christianity. The old teachers in the Greek academies were accustomed to hold back certain mysteries, which they unfolded to their disciples, but not to the uninitiated. There should be nothing of that sort with ourselves, whether in our daily life or as workers for God. Our faces should always be unveiled. By act and word we should explain, elucidate, unravel the deepest mysteries of God.

In our daily life, especially, it is imperative that there be nothing to intercept or hinder our testimony. Too often a veil is cast upon our face by quick temper; by the expression which is caught from some unholy passion and emotion; by the shyness and reserve of a false shame; by the simper of frivolity, insanity and stupidity. How many people's faces are veiled, so that their sweet, noble selves are hardly discernible? You may object: "I am naturally shy and reserved, I do not like to reveal myself, I always hide my real feelings." Yes, but you must distinguish between hiding your emotions *about* Christ and hiding Christ. It is not a good thing to be always airing your secret experiences and prayers. Nothing hardens the soul so much as, when kneeling before God in fellowship, to allow the devil to whisper: "Here is a subject about which

you may speak, and which will bring you credit." You have no right to tell secret passages between you and your Lord. But there is all the difference between veiling your personal emotions and veiling Christ's face by some covering that ought never to be there.

The Power of Reflected Light. One summer day, when walking on the slope of a Surrey hill, the sun setting behind me, right away across the valley I espied a remarkable light. It was more brilliant than electric light, and seemed to rise from the ground. At first I supposed that someone had lit a fire with resinous wood that sparkled and flashed, but there was evidently no smoke. It seemed as though some angel had dropped a brilliant star down there upon the ploughed field, and that it was burning itself out. Finally, on reaching the spot, I discovered that an old piece of broken glass had caught the light of the setting sun, and was bathed in a supernatural glow. An old piece of bottle-glass—yet so brilliant—the bottle-glass not being visible, because of the light that shone on it! We are to reflect Jesus, as a mirror reflects and flashes in the light that falls upon it. If there be a veil between the mirror and the sun, there is no possibility of its reflecting the radiant beams; and if there is any sin upon your heart which hinders your fellowship with Jesus, there is no possibility of your passing on His beauty. Only remember that the mirror is unseen, whilst the light is seen. So shall it be with us—"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." (2 Cor. iv. 5, R.V.).

The Transformation that Ensues. One used to say, "Behold Christ, you will become Christ-like." But it is better to say: "Reflect Christ, and you will be changed into His likeness." Give yourself to this, put your will into it. Constantly look up and watch what Jesus may be saying or doing at the precise moment; then think or speak in close conformity to what He would have done and is doing, repeat Him to men, and in doing so you will be transfigured, because a series of acts like this will form habit, and habit will become character, and character will shape destiny. The mere quiet contemplation of Jesus is not enough. Arouse yourselves to be like Him, to imitate Him, to step out in simple faith and obedience. Do not wait for some gradual change to pass over you as the result of meditation and beholding. Reflect Jesus Christ in every thought, act, and speech. This is the quickest way to become transformed. After all, the mirror does not quite meet the case, because it may reflect without becoming transfigured. It is better therefore to think

of a bar of iron, whose dull, dark heart is placed in the furnace until it is saturated with light and heat. Or think of some cloud near sunset, which not only reflects the sunlight, but in the reflecting is bathed through and through with radiance, so that every part becomes illumined and translucent.

The Glory of Christ and the Glory of Moses. The difference between Moses and Christ lies here. When Moses saw the glory, and reflected it, it was only skin-deep, and it died away upon his face. In the case of Jesus the glory did not come from without, but from within; it welled up in fountains and cascades, and issued forth from every pore of the body of His humiliation. You may look upon Jesus from the outside, and only get a transient likeness; whilst if you have fellowship with Him, and He is formed in your heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, you will be transfigured, beginning from the spirit, and passing thence to soul and body. This is perhaps the deepest thought.

Growth in Christ. You may imitate the Redeemer, and even then be greatly disappointed; but if the Holy Spirit shall beget the living Christ in your soul, and form Him there, you will no longer be like a man who beholds his face in the glass, and goes away to forget what manner of man he was, but you will grow up in all things into Christ, who is our Head, and men will see Him in you.

—**A Gradual Process.** The process is gradual. “From glory to glory.” We go into the sculptor’s room, and find the process of transforming the block of marble into the angel figure a very slow one. And so with us. It is quite absurd to say that we are going to overcome all our difficulties and temptations and become like Jesus Christ in a single bound. It is “from glory to glory.” Such is the process of this world and of the next; and probably all the eternity that lies before us will see our dull natures approximating towards the perfect glory of our Lord. Do not lose hope for yourselves and for one another, even if there are still so many traces of the un-Christlike nature. Do not be harsh in your judgment of others: the work is advancing from glory to glory; one degree is leading to another; the little of yesterday has grown into a closer resemblance of the infinite Christ, and nearer to the same image.

Let us not fail to honour the Holy Spirit. Ponder the title given to Him—“The Lord the Spirit.” Worship Him for His Deity. Reverence His condescension. And let Him work an unhindered miracle of grace in the growing Christliness of your being.

XXVII

THE GIFTS OF THE WILLING-HEARTED

EXODUS xxxv. 1-29; xxxvi. 2-7

1. And Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said unto them, These *are* the words which the Lord hath commanded, that *ye* should do them.

2. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.

3. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitation upon the sabbath day.

4. And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This *is* the thing which the Lord commanded, saying,

5. Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever *is* of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold, and silver, and brass,

6. And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair*.

7. And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,

8. And oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense,

9. And onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breast-plate.

10. And every wise-hearted among you shall come, and make all that the Lord hath commanded;

11. The tabernacle, his tent, and his covering, his taches, and his boards, his bars, his pillars, and his sockets,

12. The ark, and the staves thereof, *with* the mercy seat, and the veil of the covering,

13. The table, and his staves, and all his vessels, and the shewbread,

14. The candlestick also for the light, and his furniture, and his lamps, with the oil for the light,

15. And the incense altar, and his staves, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the hanging for the door at the entering in of the tabernacle,

16. The altar of burnt offering, with his brasen grate, his staves, and all his vessels, the laver and his foot,

17. The hangings of the court, his pillars, and their sockets, and the hanging for the door of the court,

18. The pins of the tabernacle, and the pins of the court, and their cords,

19. The cloths of service, to do service in the holy *place*, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office.

20. And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses.

21. And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, *and* they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments.

22. And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, *and* brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered *offered* an offering of gold unto the Lord.

23. And every man with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair*, and red skins of rams, and badgers' skins, brought *them*.

24. Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord's offering: and every man, with whom was found shittim wood, for any work of the service, brought *it*.

25. And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, *both* of blue, and of purple, *and* of scarlet, and of fine linen.

26. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun *goats' hair*.

27. And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate;

28. And spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense.

29. The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

2. And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, *even* every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it:

3. And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it *withal*. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning.

4. And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made;

5. And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make.

6. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering for the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.

7. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

XXVI

THE GIFTS OF THE WILLING-HEARTED

EXODUS xxxv. 1-29; xxxvi. 2-7

A Needed Reminder. Very significantly this chapter commences with the reiteration of the necessity of keeping the Sabbath-day rest. It may have been necessary to remind the people that, amid all the din of their preparation for the new Tabernacle, they were not to allow work, even though connected with a religious object, needlessly to break the repose of the camp during one day in seven. For us, probably, the lesson, which we must never forget, is, that our activity must always spring out of rest, and that the most profuse and generous giving of the Christian soul is effected after hours of repose and contact with the unseen and the eternal. If we always live in a hurry, we shall never conceive our highest projects, and shall never reach the furthest reaches of Christian giving. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus before she arose to anoint Him from the alabaster box; and, throughout the history of the Church, the greatest acts of munificence have been wrought by people who have come out of seclusion, or from the retirement of the village, or from those blessed homes where the young life is being nurtured in seclusion, fenced around from the turmoil of the world, until the boys and girls are able to go forth, as from the Sabbath of their childhood, to perform the strenuous work of manhood and womanhood.

—**On a Great Occasion.** The people had now gathered again around Moses, and Moses reiterated, item by item, the charge that he had received some time before; indeed, before the golden calf had been erected or the people had circled it in their delirium of idolatry. It might have been supposed that this failure on the part of Israel would have abrogated God's injunction, but it was not so. The failure of Peter on the night of our Lord's betrayal did not affect his commission or the fact that our Lord had designated him as the rock-man; and, however great your sin and failure may have been, it cannot abrogate or cancel or obliterate those words that

God has spoken of you in time past, the power of which may yet live through your life, albeit there has been an interspace of failure. "If thou wilt take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." The golden calf could not alter God's purpose to dwell among the people, and all your sin cannot alter God's purpose to dwell in your heart, His tabernacle, by the Holy Ghost.

The Charge to Israel. Notice, first, the charge that Moses gave to the people. Second, their retirement from his presence. Third, their almost immediate return—the flow, the ebb, and the returning tide.

—**God's Presence Promised.** I. *The charge which Israel received.* Standing probably upon a pinnacle of rock, Moses disclosed to them four things. (1) That God Almighty was prepared to dwell amongst them. When presently they broke up their camp and started across the desert sands, they were not to suppose that they had left Him behind them amid those inaccessible peaks and rocks; but that if they camped He would camp; if they advanced, He would advance; if they met the foe, He was in the midst of them, and Israel could not be moved, because "God would help her, and that right early." "I will dwell in the midst of thee"; it was a premonition of the incarnation of Christ, who has joined the cavalcade of humanity, never again to desert it. It was a foretaste of His eternal Presence—"Lo I am with you alway, to the end of the age."

—**God's Tabernacle to be Built.** (2) Moses said also that they might enjoy the ineffable delight and honour of building a tabernacle for God. God must give the plan, or their purpose would be incoherent; but when He had given the plan, it was for them to execute it, because its successive accomplishment depended solely upon their compliance. God could, had He chosen, by the will of His creative fiat, have reared upon the desert sands a tabernacle more fair than human fabric could ever constitute, but He desired to educate them, to give them a share in His eternal purpose, to let them feel that they were co-operating with Him in carrying out His great design. That purpose runs through the whole Bible, and through all life. Our Father courts and demands our co-operation in all the work which He is doing upon this earth. He originates the plan, but He calls for skilful hands and wise hearts to co-operate with Him. We are co-workers with God in building and tillage.

—**By Spontaneous Offerings.** (3) Moses made clear that the gifts were to be spontaneous. Again and again he used those words

"willing-hearted," and the Hebrew phrase signifies a heart driven by a holy purpose. Tennyson somewhere uses the phrase—"Whose heart drove him on like a goad"—*that* is the precise thought here. The God-prompted purpose was to drive them forward, to impel them irresistibly. What a contrast that was to their previous experience in Egypt! Those cities were built by forced labour under the lash of the taskmaster, just as all the vast monuments of antiquity were produced by slave labour. There is not a wall, or a canal, or an aqueduct belonging to the great past which was not constructed and cemented by the blood and tears and agony of vast gangs of men and women. But God said, There shall be no crack of the whip, no constraint, no pressure, save of love, brought to bear upon Israel's generosity. The people shall be told what is wanted, and then it shall be left for the impulse of the Divine Spirit to drive them, as the wind bears the yachts and fishing-smacks to their havens.

The Abundant Opportunity. (4) It was clearly indicated also, that there would be a great wealth of opportunity. Those who had costly heirlooms were to give of their treasure, onyx stones, and stones to be set in the breastplate; those who could only collect the acacia wood of the desert were to bring that; the people who had nothing at all to bring—the very poor people—might work with their skilful hands. Women who were specially clever with their hands could spin the flax, or weave the soft white wool of the Angora-goat, into hangings and curtains for the growing glory of the House. Thus a great and wide variety of work was offered to them. And when Moses had spread all this out before the people and told them what was needed he still refrained from telling them the exact pattern, because the offers were to be unconditional. Men were not to say, "I am not going to give until I have been consulted." They were not to say, "I claim to have a hand in the designation of the plan and the destination of my gift." They were to give and they were to make; but when the material was collected God Himself would see to it that it was built into a properly co-ordinated structure. The unconditional giving of this people was admirable.

It is improbable that Moses spoke at any length; he certainly did not hasten to strike while the iron was hot; he did not conclude his statement by a moving and pathetic appeal. He did what would have appeared to the collectors of modern times a most unwise thing, in letting the people go. "They will grow cool. There is no enthusiasm in those tents to stir them to mighty deeds. Surely it

would have been wiser to place them in competition, one against another. Let this man call out his amount, and that man his. Work them up and extract from them their utmost by the excitement of rivalry." No! Moses simply said, "Go; that is all I have to say to you; go, and think it over!" It is very remarkable that there is nothing said about the immediate reception with which the people greeted his words. They seemed as though they were amazed, awed, dumbfounded, and had not a single word to say. Quietly, gradually, orderly, they departed! And if Moses had not been a man of faith and prayer he might have said, "I wonder if anything will come of that!"

II. *The People's Retirement to consider.* We are not told exactly what took place when they got to their tents. It seems as though a sort of sob went right through the camp. They remembered what God Almighty had done for them in bringing them out of Egypt, in destroying their foes, and in liberating them by His mighty and out-stretched hand. Again they heard the rattle of Pharaoh's chariots behind them; again they looked out upon the teeming waters of the Red Sea at their feet; again they saw that Cloud of Light become a barrier between them and pursuit; again they felt themselves treading the ooze at the bottom of the Red Sea, whilst the heaving waters fenced them in on every hand; again they heard the voice of Miriam ringing out—"Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea." As they thought of all this, they felt as we do sometimes at the close of the Lord's Supper when we sing:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all."

With full hearts, burning towards God, they said, "The best we have is Thine." Upon the heels of that thought came the further thought, of God's constant provision for their need; they remembered how the manna had fallen with the utmost regularity through the year; they remembered how the water had flowed for their thirst; they remembered how Amalek had fled before the face of God; they remembered how the desert march had been strewn with goodness and mercy, and as they looked up to Him, again they said, "For all these daily common mercies, how can we thank Thee?"

And then the third thought came, as they looked around their tents and saw the accumulation of much which they had received, and acquired, and could give. It is calculated that the Tabernacle cost about a quarter of a million of our money; and as they looked upon their wealth, of which some had come down from Abraham and Jacob, and some had been accumulated during those prosperous years in Goshen before the slavery intervened, and some had been taken from the dead Egyptians and from the fleeing hosts of Amalek—they realised that there was nothing which had not been given to them by God. As they looked around they said, "The best is His. From Thee have all things come, and of Thine own will we give Thee."

III. *The Return of the People.* "All the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses," and the next verse begins "And they came!" Can you not see them? How long, think you, had elapsed? Did Moses speak in the morning, before the sun was hot, and did they come back to him in the evening, when the stars were beginning to shine? We know not, but they came! Words fail us in attempting to depict the eagerness, the impetuosity, the gladness of their return. It is not likely that they came in any order. Here was a prince, one of the leaders of the tribes, bringing a priceless jewel to be set; here were crowds of those whom we should term middle-class people, coming with their precious amulets, earrings, nose-rings, and all the jewellery in which Eastern women indulge. The men also abounded in jewels, as the Egyptian monuments indicate, and they came bringing these. It is also said that large numbers of women brought their mirrors of burnished copper, and out of these was made the laver. An Egyptian woman would always carry a mirror when she worshipped, as the monuments indicate, and the Israelites had probably copied the example; and either for their personal embellishment or for purposes which we cannot discover of worship, the mirror was a constant appendage of an Oriental woman's attire. Some brought beams of acacia wood, the durable wood of which the Tabernacle was made; and others brought what they had spun—the blue speaking of peace, the purple of royalty, the scarlet of blood and atonement—"Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father." They brought also morocco, rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, which supplied the waterproof and weather-proof coverings which were placed over the other wrappings, so as to preserve them in damp and heat.

The Offerings. These things were all laid out in heaps, and we are told that they did it willingly. The Spirit drove them; they did it gladly, and so profusely that at last Bezaleel and the others said, "Stop them; we have more than enough." There was actually a strike among the workmen, because they could not get through all the material! Can you not see the desert sand covered with the gifts of the people? How glad they were! and everyone went back lighter, not only in pocket, but also in heart. The whole camp felt that God had forgiven them; that God had really taken them back again into union with Himself; that from henceforth they were to be a people for His own possession; and that the Lord God would dwell among them.

God and Ourselves. It is a great story, when we think of the material out of which God made these willing workers. And if He can appropriate material like that, and transform vast numbers of men and women who yesterday were engaged in idolatry and lascivious dances into devout worshippers, what could He not do with us, if only we would let Him have the right of way through our lives! It is not probable that they had any regrets. We remember that the woman, when she found that Jesus was prepared to open within her soul the fountain of living water, left her water-pot. So these people would not have surrendered their mirrors unless they had become permanently possessed of a new love; and would not have surrendered their ornaments and treasures unless they had acquired gold and silver, and precious stones of heavenly treasure! What shall we do to awaken a similar spirit amongst ourselves?

Our Stewardship. First, we shall never get right until we look at the money we possess as a sacred stewardship. Is it not too true that the idea of ownership of money, as if it were our own to use as we like, is constantly hindering and restraining our generosity? What a noble example was set by Abraham's servant, that faithful and wise steward, who never considered himself; who never dreamt of using his master's money to line his own nest; who was content to administer it, saying to himself, "My master will care for me when I am old!" A good deal of our unwillingness to give arises from our mistrust of God. We say, "I must take care of myself, for I do not know what may happen presently." Of course it is not wrong to exercise forethought, and to make legitimate provision by life insurance and in other ways for the future, but that surely is not inconsistent with a very generous treatment of all we possess as a

stewardship, to be used for God with absolute accuracy and good faith.

The Willing Offering. Second, the Apostle Paul teaches a great lesson, for he introduces his words "Now concerning the collection" by that sublime chapter on the Resurrection, with its defiance of death and the grave. Probably there is no passage of his writings in which he more easily and boldly touches the infinite, except it be the twin chapter, Romans viii. It is when he has lifted us into the presence of the Risen Christ, seated at the right hand of God, with all things put under His feet; and has told us how this mortal is to put on immortality, and this corruptible to put on incorruption, and that the time will come when death shall be swallowed up in victory—it is just at this climax that he says "Now for the collection!" There is no doubt that it is when the soul is acclimatized in the atmosphere of these great and eternal truths, that it gives with a free heart.

—**Its Impulse.** Third, we shall never give aright until we are constrained by the love of Christ. It is not until the love of Jesus comes to these chilled hearts of ours that they will ever be really right. When we get the summer air breathing through our characters; when we get the tropical love of God shed abroad in our hearts; then we shall be constrained to hold everything as for Him.

But though it is good to give under the impulse of a moving appeal, or the rushing torrent of a divine love, it is still better to give systematically and on a plan. The Apostle knew well the importance of periodic storing of the Lord's portion, and urged it on the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2). It seems almost impossible to induce persons to adopt this habit in mature life. Their habits are soon stereotyped, and remain rigid. But it is not difficult to imbue the young with the ideal of systematically setting apart either actually in a bag, or by opening a private ledger-account with the Lord, a definite proportion of all moneys received. A child cannot begin too young. In this, also, it is true, that if he is trained in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it. If any should say, "I reckon that all is the Lord's"—let such be very careful to see by actual figuring-out, that they do not give less than a tenth, and as much more as they choose.

XXVII

THE GLORY OF CONSUMMATED WORK

EXODUS xxxix. 32–xl. 38

32. Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished : and the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they.

33. And they brought the tabernacle unto Moses, the tent, and all his furniture, his taches, his boards, his bars, and his pillars, and his sockets,

34. And the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of badgers' skins, and the vail of the covering,

35. The ark of the testimony, and the staves thereof, and the mercy seat,

36. The table, *and* all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread,

37. The pure candlestick, *with* the lamps thereof, *even with* the lamps to be set in order, and all the vessels thereof, and the oil for light,

38. And the golden altar, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the hanging for the tabernacle door,

39. The brasen altar, and his grate of brass, his staves, and all his vessels, the laver and his foot,

40. The hangings of the court, his pillars, and his sockets, and the hanging for the court gate, his cords, and his pins, and all the vessels of the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of the congregation.

41. The cloths of service to do service in the holy *place*, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and his sons' garments, to minister in the priests' office.

42. According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work.

43. And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it : and Moses blessed them.

1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

2. On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.

3. And thou shalt put therein the ark of the testimony, and cover the ark with the vail.

4. And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof.

5. And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the hanging of the door to the tabernacle.

6. And thou shalt set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.

7. And thou shalt set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and shalt put water therein.

8. And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the hanging at the court gate.

9. And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof: and it shall be holy.

10. And thou shalt anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar: and it shall be an altar most holy.

11. And thou shalt anoint the laver and his foot, and sanctify it.

12. And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water.

13. And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.

14. And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats:

15. And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.

16. Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he.

17. And 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.

18. And Moses reared up the tabernacle, and fastened his sockets, and set up the boards thereof, and put in the bars thereof, and reared up his pillars.

19. And he spread abroad the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above upon it; as the Lord commanded Moses.

20. And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy seat above upon the ark:

21. And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the vail of the covering, and covered the ark of the testimony, as the Lord commanded Moses.

22. And he put the table in the tent of the congregation, upon the side of the tabernacle northward, without the vail.

23. And he set the bread in order upon it before the Lord; as the Lord had commanded Moses.

24. And he put the candlestick in the tent of the congregation, over against the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward.

25. And he lighted the lamps before the Lord; as the Lord commanded Moses.

26. And he put the golden altar in the tent of the congregation before the vail:

27. And he burned sweet incense thereon; as the Lord commanded Moses.

28. And he set up the hanging *at* the door of the tabernacle.

29. And he put the altar of burnt offering *by* the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the meat offering; as the Lord commanded Moses.

30. And he set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and put water there, to wash *withal*.

31. And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat:

32. When they went into the tent of the congregation, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as the Lord commanded Moses.

33. And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work.

34. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

35. And 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.

36. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys:

37. But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up.

38. For the cloud of the Lord *was* upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

XXVII

THE GLORY OF CONSUMMATED WORK

EXODUS xxxix. 32—xl. 38

A Great Day for Israel. At last the construction of the various pieces of furniture, the weaving and spinning, were done, and on the New Year's day of the second year of the Exodus, God bade Moses rear up the tabernacle, and with his own hand place each article in its own position. The command was given directly to Moses, and by him immediately and precisely obeyed.

It must have been a wonderful and memorable day for Israel. They brought the tabernacle to Moses in its various pieces, and they seem to have been so laid out, perhaps on the sand, perhaps on the lower slopes of Sinai, that he was able to see them. "And Moses saw all the work, and, behold, they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it; and Moses blessed them" (ver. 43). Then on the first day of the first month of the year, he proceeded to rear up the tabernacle, and insert its furniture. By the time of the evening-sacrifice, all was done. He had placed the shew-bread table with its loaves on the right, and the candlestick on the left-hand of the Holy Place, lighting its lamps; had set the Altar of Incense near the vail, and burnt sweet spices and incense on it; had washed in the water of the laver, anointing it, and the great altar, and all its vessels. He had also offered there the burnt-offering and the meat-offering; had reverently placed the Ark in the Most Holy Place, hiding it with the curtain. Aaron and his sons also had been invested with their robes, and inducted into their office; and the Priesthood, which was to last till the fall of Jerusalem, had been inaugurated with due solemnity.

Retirement. When all was completed, the congregation, deeply moved and solemnised, retired to their tents, and night began to settle on the mountains. Moses, also, with one last loving look at the structure, standing in complete and beautiful symmetry, also retired from the scene, full of thankfulness. Was it then that he

composed the ninetieth Psalm? surely nothing could have been more exactly in keeping with the spirit and purpose of that day:

“Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants,
And Thy glory upon their children.
And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us:
And establish Thou the work of our hands upon us;
Yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.”
(Vers. 16, 17, R.V.)

The Presence Manifested. They had hardly reached their tents, and the darkness had only just fallen, when there was a wonderful seal given of the Divine satisfaction and acceptance of the people's gifts. The cloud which had guided their march from Succoth, and was brooding over the temporary Tent of Meeting, seems to have moved thence, and to have cast its fleecy enfolding glory upon the new structure. Simultaneously, a brilliant light, of surpassing glory, here spoken of as “the glory of the Lord,” which was undoubtedly the Divine Shechinah, shone from within the Tabernacle itself, so much so that the very curtains were transfigured by its glow and the whole place was transfigured and rendered resplendent with glory. When Moses, seeing what was taking place, hastened back from his tent, that he might see that great sight, which recalled the bush that had burned with fire, he found himself debarred from entrance. The Presence of God was so manifestly in possession, that no mortal could behold it and live. The words of the Apocalypse were indeed anticipated, “Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God.” If only Israel had been true to the suggestion of that Divine Presence, there would have been no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, and their march to Canaan would have been a triumphal progress. The forty years would never have been spent in the desert; *that* generation would have possessed the land; and the settlement would have been effected without loss or carnage. But, in any case, from that moment Israel realised that the God of their fathers was their fellow-pilgrim, and that Immanuel was their portion.

A Presence for our Bodies. *The reference of this to our mortal body.* In John i. 14 we are told that the Eternal Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men. The word translated *dwelt* is *tabernacled*. He dwelt in a tent or tabernacle; and the Evangelist, speaking

for himself and his fellow-apostles, said: "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father"—a glory that specially shone through His mortal flesh on the Mount of Transfiguration. There was an exact parallel between the irradiation of the Shechinah through the completed tabernacle, and the transfiguring light that made our Lord's vesture seem white as snow.

—**The Body as a Tabernacle.** We learn also from 2 Cor. v. 1, that "if the earthly house of *this tabernacle* be dissolved, we have a building." With this we compare the words of Peter, in his Second Epistle, when he speaks of putting off his tabernacle shortly, as the Lord had showed him. All these passages support the conception that the body is but a tabernacle, the tent of the soul, as slight, frail, and transitory as a tent, and that there is as clear a distinction between the soul and the body as between the occupant of a tent and the slight curtains beneath which for a time he dwells. If, then, the body is the tent or tabernacle, with its aspect towards the outer world, must not the Holy Place, with its candlestick, incense-altar, and shewbread represent the soul, with its various faculties? And must not the Holy of Holies, tenanted by God's sacred Presence, represent the spirit?

A Wonder and a Warning. The very elaboration with which all the details of Tabernacle-construction are given, indicate that some profound teaching underlies them, and we are reminded of the Psalmist's words,—“I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. . . . My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned” (Ps. cxxxix. 14-16, R.V.). We speak the literal truth, then, in affirming that the elaborate treatment of these items in the construction of the tabernacle has a secondary reference to the way in which this wonderful nature of spirit, soul, and body has been built up. God is always making our bodies out of the dust of the ground, and breathing into us the living soul, and bringing us in contact with the Second Adam, to receive His quickening Spirit. It is thus that in us, too, the fire begins to burn, which irradiates the faculties of the mind, whilst ennobling and invigorating the body. Let us freely open our nature to the life of Jesus, that we may bear the image of the Heavenly, and realise His invigorating health. “To you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness

arise with healing in His wings, and ye shall go forth and gambol as calves of the stall."

The Tabernacle and the Church. *The further reference of this to the Church.* The Tabernacle in the old dispensation is in many respects the counterpart of the Church in the new. (1) As the Tabernacle was built on the plan revealed in the Mount, so there must be a Divine plan of the Church for we are told, that long before our Saviour laid her foundations in His death and resurrection, He loved the Church. Evidently there must have been an ideal Church, which so attracted Him that He was gladly willing to give Himself to win her.

(2) As the Tabernacle was made in different portions, which were made independently of each other and by different hands, so the Church is being constructed, each age, each country, each denomination contributing something. None have seen more than their own small bit of the glorious Church, as she has been revealed to the eye of her Lord; and we do not all understand how our work will fit in with the rest; it is enough to accomplish our share as perfectly as we can, leaving the ultimate fitting-together and erection to the great Architect Himself.

As Moses finished the work—"Thus was all the work of the Tabernacle finished"—so the last member will be added to the Body of Christ and the last name will be appended to the long list in the Book of Life.

The Great Day of Completion. Ah, happy day, when angel voices shall be heard proclaiming, "It is done, and the mystery of God is finished!" Then will the Church be manifested. "When Christ shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory." And as she stands forth in her completed loveliness, the Divine light will be seen in her, as in the Tabernacle of old. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa. lx. 1-4, R.V.). When all is done that must be done, and all the scaffolding is removed, the beauty, symmetry, and completeness of the Divine Ideal will be revealed, and will constitute a sanctuary for Jehovah.

The Tabernacle and Our Life work. *This is also a reference to our life work.* Repeatedly we are reminded of the absolute and untiring

obedience of Moses. Throughout this chapter the sentence is repeated like a bell—"as the Lord commanded Moses." He was the recognised constructor of the whole system of the Hebrew constitution, religious ritual, and Tent of Meeting. But he might have said with our Lord: "The Son can do nothing from Himself; but what things soever the Father doeth, these also He doeth likewise." But notice that when a man builds on God's plan, and submits himself to the Divine Will, God will set His seal of approval on the result of his labours. He placed the crown on Moses' obedience, when He entered the Tabernacle, saying: "This is My resting-place for ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy" (Ps. cxxxii. 14-16, R.V.). In some such manner God will attest His acceptance and approval of our poor efforts. His people, who wait for Him, shall never be ashamed; though we sow in tears, we shall reap in joy. Our materials may be scanty and cheap, but the Lord will be a wall of fire round about them, and the glory in the midst.

The Indwelling Lord our Guide. *Where the Lord dwells, He guides.* When the cloud was taken up, the Lord moved forward; when it rested, they rested. So God is our guide, and the guide of His people. They that rest under His protection or march under His convoy shall not want any good thing. The manna always falls, and the waters flow, where the cloud broods. Keep with the cloud and you shall not want any good thing: but be as careful not to lag behind, as not to anticipate and go before. Guard against indolence on the one side, and impetuous haste on the other.

Sometimes when riding or walking at night through a wood, one cannot see the road or path, because of the darkness that covers the ground, but on looking up we can always discover the track marked out, by the path of light between the trees overhead. So when the way is hard to find, and human intelligence fails, look up! Yonder is the Presence-cloud! It will be over you by day for a shield, and by night for a sun. When it moves, your enemies shall flee before you: and when it settles, you may sleep securely beneath the unslumbering keeping care of Jehovah. "Happy are the people who are in such a case: yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord!"