

Exodus Devotional Commentary 3

Exodus Commentary F. B. Meyer Devotional Comments on Exodus 25-40

Part 1

Part 2

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Main Resource Page- Exodus Commentaries, Sermons

Disclaimer/caveat: One should be aware that F B Meyer was a major leader in the so-called Keswick movement, which many associate with the "Let Go, Let God" approach to sanctification, a teaching with which I do not agree. Meyer's works are offered (and linked) on this site because he offers (in my opinion) much excellent, practical teaching. In the final analysis, as with any works written by men, the discerning reader should examine everything carefully, hold fast to that which is good and abstain from every form of evil, by examining the Scriptures daily with a Berean-like mindset (Acts 17:11).

Here is an article from the recommended resource Gotquestions.org which is an orthodox, conservative, fair and balanced source of Biblically based answers...

Question: "What is the Keswick movement, and is it biblical?"

Answer: The Keswick movement, also called the Higher Life movement, is a theological movement that originated in England in the early 19th century. It was heavily influenced by the teachings of [John Wesley](#), John William Fletcher, and Adam Clarke. Since 1875 promoters have organized the annual Keswick Convention. Various Christian leaders have been involved in the Keswick Convention through the years, including missionaries [Hudson Taylor](#) and Amy Carmichael, devotional writer Oswald Chambers, and evangelist [Billy Graham](#).

Essentially, Keswick theology teaches that the Christian life consists of two primary crises (or major turning points): [justification](#) and sanctification, both of which happen at different times in the life of the believer. After salvation one must have another encounter with the Spirit; otherwise, he or she will not progress into holiness or the "deeper" things of God. This second encounter with the Spirit, in Keswick terminology, is called "[entire sanctification](#)," "the [second blessing](#)," or "the second touch." This emphasis on a second, post-salvation experience corresponds with the Pentecostal idea of the "baptism" of the Spirit. Some Keswick teachers would even say that [sinless perfection](#) is possible after one receives the "second blessing." (**EDITORIAL COMMENT: BUT READ 1 John 1:8 WHICH CLEARLY REFUTES SUCH TEACHING**)

Although it is true that both [justification](#) (i.e., getting saved) and sanctification (i.e., becoming more like Christ) are vital aspects of the Christian life, overemphasizing the distinction between them tends to produce two different "classes" of Christian—those who are not being sanctified and those who are being sanctified. Moreover, according to Keswick theology, we can decide which camp we belong in, and the initiation of sanctification is something that depends on us after we are saved.

The tendency for theological error resulting from overemphasizing one side of a debate versus another has been demonstrated time and time again throughout church history. For example, the well-known debate between Calvinists and Arminians is frequently seen (somewhat inaccurately) as a "conflict" between God's sovereignty and man's autonomous free will. Many on both sides of this debate have a tendency to overemphasize one side of this "conflict" to the exclusion of the other. Those who emphasize God's sovereignty tend to minimize human volition, while those who emphasize man's ability to choose end up burdening themselves and others with the charge to behave perfectly before the Lord. In reality, both God's sovereignty and man's volition must be held in tension with one another, because both are taught in Scripture.

In the same way, Keswick theologians take a very real and biblical distinction between justification and sanctification and press it too far. Scripture tells us that all those who are saved (justified) are also being sanctified. God promises to finish the work He began in us (Philippians 1:6).

"But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification" (Romans 6:22, NASB). We are freed from sin by Christ's sacrifice on the cross, but our freedom must lead to holiness (sanctification), not further sin. Rather, Paul tells us that we are "to consider [ourselves] to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11, NASB). The picture that we see painted in these verses is that it is impossible for the believer to persist in sin, once he or she has truly entered into a relationship with Christ.

Keswick theology says that one could be a genuine Christian and still say something like, "I have been justified, but I am not being sanctified, because I don't see the need to be right now. I'm a Christian, surely; I'm just not as dedicated as others might be." Of course, Scripture tells us that such an attitude is really evidence that the person speaking is not a believer (1 John 2:3–4). As a result, Keswick theology may give false assurance of salvation to those who refuse to submit to the Word of God but still want to think of themselves as truly saved.

Sanctification is a long, gradual, and sometimes tortuous process, and it is something that all believers will experience, not just those who have a "second touch" of the Spirit.

The Keswick movement has some commendable points—an emphasis on the lordship of Christ and personal holiness, discipleship, and a promotion of missionary activity. And some historic evangelistic efforts have begun at Keswick Conventions. However, Keswick theology's insistence on a "second blessing," its hierarchy of "sanctified" Christians vs. those who are "only justified," and its bent toward the unbiblical doctrine of entire sanctification are causes of concern. ([Keswick Movement - Is it Biblical? - Gotquestions](#))

See Also:

- [Is there a second blessing subsequent to salvation?](#)
- [What is entire sanctification?](#)
- [Is sinless perfection possible in this life?](#)

Related Resources:

Dr. Andrew David Naselli who earned a Ph.D. in theology from Bob Jones University (2006), an M.A. in Bible from Bob Jones University (2003), and a B.A. in Bible from Baptist College of Ministry (2002). His 2006 dissertation is entitled, "Keswick Theology: A Historical and Theological Survey and Analysis of the Doctrine of Sanctification in the Early Keswick Movement, 1875-1920," and its thesis is that Keswick theology's view of sanctification is theologically erroneous. He and his wife, Jenni, live in Deerfield, IL and maintain [AndyNaselli.com](#).

[Keswick Movement and Theology – Justin Taylor - see especially the PowerPoint presentation](#)

- A Historical and Theological Survey of the Early Keswick Movement – [mp3](#)
- A Theological Analysis of the Early Keswick Movement – Part 1 – [mp3](#)
- A Theological Analysis of the Early Keswick Movement – Part 2 (with Q & A) – [mp3](#)
- [80 Slide Power Point Presentation](#)
- [Summary Notes - 5 pages](#) -

Naselli notes "Four commendable characteristics (of Keswick Theology): 1. affirms fundamental Protestant orthodoxy 2. exalts Christ and faith rather than self-dependence 3. warmly devotional 4. legacy of Christian service" (EDITORIAL COMMENT - I would add that it generally promotes dependence on the enabling power of the Holy Spirit rather than dependence on self, which is an emphasis that is thoroughly Biblical and tragically downplayed in the modern Christian church. Note we are not advocating, nor promoting a "Let go, let God" approach, which is unbiblical. Our approach would be a balance of God's Supernatural Provision by the Spirit (Php 2:13+) and Man's Responsibility to Respond to the Spirit's supernatural energizing work (Php 2:12+). Thus a more apropos "slogan" might be something like "Let God and Let's Go" emphasizing the mysterious interaction of God's part and Man's part. This is the approach to progressive sanctification which is advocated and promoted on [preceptaustin.org](#).

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 (Exo 25:34-35). 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 (Pro 20:27). 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 waking 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" (Jn 12:35-36). 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 candies, 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 candies, 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, failing 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 debris, 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 lumina; 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 (Exo 27:20-21; and Zec 4:12). 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" (1Sa 3:3).

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.

Exodus 26:1-30

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TABERNACLE

The Structure of the Tabernacle. It hardly fails 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 Samuel 3:3 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 1Sa 21:4, of the shewbread, the characteristic institution of the Levitical Code. In 2 Samuel 7:6 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 1Ki 6:1) 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 Psa 78:58-67.) 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 Exo 29:42-46). 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" (1Ch 17:4-5). 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.

(2) But 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 ought 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.

(3) But 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 Hebrews 9:8 : "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 1Co 2:14, 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" (Eph 2:19-22, R.V.).

Exodus 26:31-37; Heb 10:19-22

INTO THE HOLIEST

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 Exodus 26:33 with Exo 26:6, 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 9:9) 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 Hebrews 10:19 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 Heb 9:8, Heb 9:12, Heb 9:25, 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 Psa 23:1-6, 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 9, 10.

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 Psa 108:1-13. 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 22., 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 10:19-20, 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 (Act 6:7).

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 3:14, 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 9:15, 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. 10., 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 9:19-22, 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 10:5-7, 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 2:10). 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 10:12-13, 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 (Heb 10:17). 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 9:14); 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 8:13, 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.

Exodus 27:1-19; Ex 30:17-21

THE COURT AND ITS CONTENTS

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 (Exo 26:16 with Exo 26:36).

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" (Ecc 5:2, 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 (Exo 20:24). 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 Psa 1:5, 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" (Psa 50:14, 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" (Mat 23:38). "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second" (Heb 10:9). "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (1Co 13:10).

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 13., 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 heedeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (Jn 13:10, 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" (Jn 13:1, 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.

Exodus 28.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF AARON AND HIS SONS

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 (Exo 28:42-43); 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 (Exo 28:36 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 (Exo 28:31, 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 breastplate.

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 (Exo 26:31-36), 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 therein 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 (Exo 28:29-30).

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 (Exo 28:26-27). 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" (Exo 28:29).

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 7:28).

They had to offer sacrifices day by day for their own sins, as well as for the sins of the people (Heb 7:27).

They stood day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which could never take away sins (Heb 10:11).

They were appointed without an oath, and on the basis of a casual commandment (Heb 7:21).

They were not suffered to continue by reason of death (Heb 7:23). They were, therefore, necessarily many, and were always transmitting their priesthood to others (Heb 7:23).

They represented a covenant and system which were destined to be superseded (Heb 7:12).

Symptoms of the admitted unsatisfactoriness of the Aaronic priesthood were even on the inspired page. Long centuries after its establishment, they found expression in Psa 110:1-7., 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 7:11).

Melchizedek. 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 signalled 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 2:14, 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 7:26-27, 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 8:1-2, 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 4:15, 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 2:17, 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 2:17).

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" (1Sa 23:9-11, R.V.). It is not difficult to imagine that in the ease 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."

Exodus 29; Exodus 30:22–33

THE CONSECRATION AND DAILY DUTY

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 7:17).

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 7:4-9, 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" (Heb 7:11-19).
2. The Aaronic priesthood was constituted and continued without an oath; but in the case of Melchizedek, the Psalmist said (Psa 110:4) that the Lord swore and would not repent Himself, "Thou art a priest for ever" (Heb 7:20-21).
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 (Heb 7:22-25).
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 (Heb 7:26-28).
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 2:5-6, 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. (Exo 29:5-9). Leviticus 8:7-9 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" (Zec 6:12-13, 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 Exo 29:24, 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" (Exo 29:7). 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 (Exo 31:3; Exo 37:29). 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 8:10-12).

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. (Exo 29:10, 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 4:11-12). 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" (Exo 29:22).

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 (Exo 29:32).

A brief digression ensues at this point (Exo 29:29-30), 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 childraces. "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 Psa 55:17; Dan 6:10). 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!

Exodus 30:1-10; 34-38

THE GOLDEN ALTAR OF PERPETUAL INCENSE

The Altar of Incense. The natural place for a description of the Altar of Incense would seem to have been in Exodus 25., 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 Exo 40:21-29, 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 4:11).

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" (Psa 141:2, 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 9:24, 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" (Luk 1:10). 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 8:3-4, 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. (Suggested by some words of Henry Ward Beecher.) 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 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 5:8, 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 lisplings 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" (Psa 55:17, 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 6:10, 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 17. It is in John 17. 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-oblivion. 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 (Exodus 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 16:12-13). 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 16:18-19). 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. 4:3-21).

(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!

Exodus 30:11-16; Exodus 38:24–31

THE RANSOM MONEY

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?" (Mat 17:24, 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" (Exo 30:12). 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" (2Sa 24:3-10, R.V.).

"These sheep, what have they done? let thine hand be against me and my father's house" (1Ch 21:17, 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"

(Exo 15:11-13, 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 Laocoon without the snakes entwining about his limbs, and it is placed in the market-place, to test the opinion of the passersby. 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 3:22-24, 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" (Rom 10:12-13, 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 (Exo 40:17; Num 1:1). 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 1:2, Num 1:3, Num 1:18). 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" (Jn 1:12-13, 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 8:15-17, 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" (Ezr 8:28-29, R.V.).

Exodus 31:1–11

THE DESIGNATED ARTISTS

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 (In the R.V. his name is Bezalel, but it also appears in English Literature under his A.V. name.) 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 (Exo 31:3). 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.

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" (2Ti 1:14, 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 painstaking 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" (Exo 38:23, 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" (Exo 28:2). 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" (Psa 150:3-6, 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. (1Co 12:7, 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 (Exo 35:34). 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 gas meter, 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 Jn 3:34). 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.

Exodus 31:12-17

GOD'S SABBATH-REST AND OURS

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 Exo 25:1-3, 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 17:9-14; Act 7:8). 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 Exo 31:16, 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 33:25-26, 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" (Exo 31:17).

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 aeons, 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 4:11, 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 slit 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 aeons 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.

Exodus 31:18; 32:15-20; 34:1, 28, 29

TABLES OF THE TESTIMONY

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 (Exodus 24:12); 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 (Exodus 25:16). 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. 3:3); 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 (Exodus 32:15). 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 thunderclap 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. 5:20-21).

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 fails 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.

Exodus 32:1-6; 21-29

THE GOLDEN CALF

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 (Jos 14:6). 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 (Ezr 3:2), 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 Temporis. 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 1:21, 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 5:16-17, 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 eidolon, 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 (Exo 32:20)! 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 wherewith 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."

Exodus 32:7-14, Exodus 32:30–35

THE FOURFOLD INTERCESSION OF MOSES

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 (Exo 32:10); he came to the conclusion that he would offer himself as a sacrifice (Exo 32:30); he told His Almighty Friend that he positively dared not adventure the journey alone (Exo 33:15); and finally he beheld His glory, or at least the rear-guard of that glory, as the procession swept down the mountain gorge (Exo 34:6). 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" (Exo 32:9-10, 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 22:1-2, 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 Sods. 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 9:1-3, 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 apostasy. 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" (Exo 30:17).

(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 rekniit? 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 cortege 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" (Exo 34:10). 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.

ALONE, YET NOT ALONE

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.

Exodus 31:18; 32:15-20; 34:1, 28, 29

TABLES OF THE TESTIMONY

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 (Exo 24:12); 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 (Exo 25:16). 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 (2Co 3:3); 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 (Exo 32:15). 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 thunderclap 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 5:20-21).

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

Exodus 33:18, Exodus 34:27

THE CLEFT OF THE ROCK

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 pulverized, 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 I 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 1Co 13:1-13. 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 husbandman 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 plenitude, 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 if 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 thou- sands--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" (Dt 32:9, Dt 32:10, 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 Hivite 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 (Exo 34:12).
2. That all their images, altars and groves should be destroyed (Exo 34:13).

3. That there should be no intermarriage between their sons and daughters and those of the heathen (Exo 34:15-16).
4. That no molten image should be made to represent God (Exo 34:17).
5. That the passover feast should be observed (Exo 34:18).
6. That the firstborn should be dedicated or redeemed (Exo 34:19-20).
7. That the Sabbath rest should be observed at all times of the year (Exo 34:21).
8. That the feasts of Pentecost and Tabernacles should be maintained regularly (Exo 34:22).
9. That at all the three great festivals all the males should appear before God (Exo 34:23).
10. That no leaven should be used with any sacrifice (Exo 34:24).
11. That the first fruits of all things should be offered to God (Exo 34:25).
12. That no kid should be seethed in its mother's milk (Exo 34:26).

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.

Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Corinthians 3:18

HE WIST NOT

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" (Exo 34:30).

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" (2Co 3:18, 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." (2Co 4:5, 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.

Exodus 35:1-29; 36:2-7

THE GIFTS OF THE WILLING-HEARTED

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.

I. The charge which Israel received. (God's Presence Promised).

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."

(2) God's Tabernacle to be Built.

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.

(3) By Spontaneous Offerings.

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.

(4) The Abundant Opportunity.

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 coordinated 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, dumb founded, 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 enduring 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 (1Co 16:1-2). 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.

Exodus 39:32, 40:38

THE GLORY OF CONSUMMATED WORK

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" (Exo 39:43). 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 shewbread 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."
(Psa 90:16-17, 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 1:14 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 2Co 5:1, 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 un-perfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned" (Psa 139:14-16, 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 60:1-4, 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" (Psa 132:14-16, 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!"

THE END