

Jonah

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All that I desire to do upon the Book of Jonah the prophet is, to suggest a few things which have struck my own mind with interest, leaving the subject to the further meditations of my brethren, trusting withal, that to whatever measure of knowledge we may, any of us, attain, it may prove to be the nurture and strength of the kingdom of God within us.

Jonah prophesied about the time of Jeroboam II. king of Israel. He was the witness that "mercy rejoiceth against judgment," for he foretold of gracious things to Israel, though the people were still a guilty and rebellious people. As we read in 2 Kings 14: 23, "In the 15th year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam. the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years; and he did that which was evil in the right of the Lord; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin; he restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah the son of Amittai the prophet, Which was of Gath-hepher."

But in the book which bears his name, there is no notice of this prophecy. It opens, however, with something that is in character with it. It opens with the Lord giving Jonah a commission to go and preach against Nineveh, and Jonah's refusal to do so, because, as he tells us himself afterwards, he knew that the Lord was "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repented Him of the evil," (Jonah 4: 2). He had been taught to know that this was the way of the God of Israel, by his experience of His late doings in Samaria, and he thus suspected that such would be His way now in Nineveh. But his Jewish temper, so to call it, was strong in him. He could not consent to be the bearer of mercy to the Gentiles. He had, without reserve, published the good tidings in Samaria, but he could not consent to do the same now in Nineveh of the Gentiles.

All this disclosure of the hidden springs of the prophet's disobedience is very significant. He had fled from the presence of the Lord, but enmity to the Gentiles was the real cause of it all. And thus we may say, Like prophet, like people. Jonah's sin is Israel's sin. Israel has always refused the thought, that the Gentiles could stand in the favour of God; and in delineating their sin, "forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles" is noticed by the apostle as the last great feature in the full form of their sin (1 Thess. 2: 16). Then the wrath came upon them to the uttermost, as now upon the prophet. He refuses to go to Nineveh, believing that God would turn the curse into a blessing; but turning his back upon the Lord, goes down to Joppa, and there takes a ship to Tarshish. The wrath, however, comes upon him to the uttermost. Vengeance suffers him not to live. A wind from the Lord lies heavily upon him, and upon those who sail with him, and the ship was like to be broken.

I need not here speak particularly of the excellent conduct of his shipmates towards him, or of his own indifference, for a time, to the fact that his back was turned upon the Lord. Both however are remarkable. He was fast asleep, while they were crying out for fear. But he is soon made to hear not merely the roar of the wind, but the voice of God in the wind, and the sentence of death against himself. It was the voice of the Lord that was then upon the waters, and the sleeper is awakened from the sleep of a blunted conscience; he bows his head under the righteous judgment of the Lord, and will have himself offered as a sacrifice for the safety of those who were sailing with him. He takes the

sentence of death unto himself. He now knows that he was the Achan in the camp, the ὁ κατέχων, that which letted the mercy of God from reaching the mariners. They were suffering; but his sin, he now sees, was "the accursed thing" that caused it all, and must be taken away. "Take me up," says he, "and cast me forth into the sea, so shall the sea be calm unto you, for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." It was a sin unto death and must not be prayed for. The mariners, in their kindness, may row hard, and harder still, but all will not do. The sea cries, "give, give." The fire on the altar demands the victim. A sin unto death has been committed, and all struggle or rowing for life is vain. Joshua in such a case may lie on the ground, and cry to the Lord all the day long, but it will not do. (Joshua 7) The accursed thing must be taken away. Jonah must be cast overboard, into the belly of hell, as Achan must be stoned; and then, and not till then, Ai, the city of the enemy, shall fall, and the haven, the desire of the mariners shall be reached.

Accordingly our prophet is now cast into the sea. But the sea will not be allowed to be the pit of destruction to him, but he shall find rather a city of refuge, or hiding place for a season there. The belly of a fish is prepared to receive him from the sea, and there he abides. Like every city of refuge, the whale's belly was Jonah's shelter in the midst of judgment, — the place of life to him in the region of death. And there he talks of salvation. "Thou hast brought up my life from corruption," says he, "O Lord, my God . . . salvation is of the Lord." He had before, when in the ship, heard the thunder of judgment, but now in the fish's belly, it is the still small voice of mercy. He looks to God's temple, the appointed place (2 Chr. 6), and he knows that grace and salvation are God's way in His sanctuary. There by faith he surveys the brazen altar for the guilty sinner, and the golden altar for the accepted sinner, and the mercy-seat for the Lord to sit on. And then he knows that sacrifices of thanksgiving and the payment of his vows are before Him, and he can talk of life in the midst of death. "I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again towards thy holy temple. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains, the earth with her bars was about me for ever, yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord, my God." With as much certainty of heart, though not with the same comfort, he knows salvation as well as though he were on dry land again. As secure he is, though not as happy, by this distant sight of the temple by faith, as though he had been in Jerusalem. "How say ye to my soul," in spirit he says, "flee as a bird to your mountain? . . . The Lord is in his holy temple." (Ps. 11) This was his joy.

And this is the manslayer's joy in every city of refuge. The avenger of blood is on the foot, it is true, but the gates of the city have closed upon him, and there he tastes and knows his full salvation, with the sure prospect of his home and kindred again. And every city of refuge which we trace in scripture, has thus its peculiar joy as well as safety.

Noah in the ark was in a city of refuge, and there he was as safe as though he had been in the new world. But he had his peculiar joy there also, as well as safety. He opened the window, and let out the raven and the dove, and the dove returned to him with an olive-leaf, the pledge that the new earth should soon be his in peace and fruitfulness. He could not, it is true, go forth till the Lord gave him leave, — he could not open the *door*, but he might the *window* of the ark, and from thence he looked out and saw the uncovered land again; and this was his joy and the exercise of his heart, though still amid the desolations of judgment. — The blood-stained door was a city of refuge to the Israelite, while the angel of death was passing through Egypt. But there, he fed upon the Lamb, every morsel of which told him of his full security; and he might have looked at the staff in his hand, and the shoe on his foot, as, the token that the time was short. — The wilderness was another city of refuge to all Israel. For judgment was before and behind them. In the midst of death they were in life as in every city of refuge. Egypt behind had just been judged, and the Amorites before, were just about to be judged, — the waters were rising to cover the one land, as they had already covered the other. But Israel was in their

refuge in the wilderness, as safe as though they had been in Canaan, and there learnt wonders of grace and glory. — Rahab's house with the scarlet line in the window, was another blood-sprinkled door, or city of refuge; but there though Jericho was the accursed place, she knew her safety, and to the joy of her heart (for she had loved and counselled for them) she might have looked on her kindred and known them to be as safe as herself. — And so at the end. Their chambers will be a city of refuge to the remnant, while the indignation passes by. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Isa. 26: 20). But then also they will have large exercise of heart. The Psalms give us much of this, I believe. In the 29th we see something of it. There the voice of the Lord is abroad, full of power and majesty, falling upon the waters and upon the cedars, and dividing the flames of fire. But the remnant all the while have found their sanctuary in God, and there in His temple, like Jonah, they thus in spirit sing — "the Lord sitteth upon the flood, yea the Lord sitteth king for ever; the Lord will give strength unto His people with peace" (Ps. 29: 10, 11).

And so the believer now. He sojourns in a judged world, but he is in the Lord his refuge, and he can there talk of salvation. He dwells in the shadow of death, but he can sing of life. The Spirit of God could enter where Jonah was, and teach him the ways of the temple; and so has the same Spirit, the Holy Ghost, come to abide in the saints, though still in the place of uncleanness and death, to tell them of a far richer blessing, and of a more glorious love than ever Adam knew in the unsoiled walks of Eden.

It is the way of our God thus to do abundantly more than merely repair the breach. He makes the eater yield meat to us, and the strong man sweetness. That is God's riddle rather than Samson's. Jonah is now made to interpret it, as it were, for he is brought home to God with a new song in his month, and with richer experience of God's love than ever he had, and that too, in the belly of the whale; and then when this revelation of grace is thus made his to the joy of his soul, he is cast out again on the dry land.

Thus was it with our prophet, and all this judgment and mercy of God with him, this process of death and resurrection lead him out, not merely to deliverance, but to the obedience of faith also. "He arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord." And this it always does, whether in Jonah or in us. We rise to newness of life. "If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." We were simply born of the flesh before, but now we are joined to the Lord, and one Spirit with Him.

We have thus all of us our common interest in these Jonah-mercies. Jonah is a sign to us all. But I am, of course, aware that our blessed Lord has claimed His likeness to Jonah also, saying in His doctrine, "for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." He thus found His type in our prophet, as the one who died and was buried, and rose again the third day. But He dwells much more on Jonah being a sign to others, than the type of Himself. He speaks of both Jonah, and the Son of man as signs; Jonah to the Ninevites, and both Jonah and the Son of man to that generation of Israel (Matt. 12: 39; Matt. 16: 4; Luke 11: 29, 30). And this is a doctrine of great value. The death and resurrection of Jonah, was a sign to the Ninevites of what the Lord required from them, and of the way in which He would deal with them; and so the death and resurrection, whether of Jonah or the Son of man, is a sign to Israel of what the Lord expects from them, and of the manner in which He will deal with them.

For as one who had died and risen again, Jonah now goes and preaches against Nineveh; and as such a one he was a sign to them of what that preaching should lead them to, and of what it required of them. And we find that the sign was answered in them. On going to them the prophet at once puts them

under sentence of death. "Within forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." And at once they hear these words as the sentence of death against themselves, as Jonah had heard it in the roar of the wind before, and they bow their head under it as he did, accepting the punishment of their sins, and then, like Jonah, enter the grave, taking sackcloth on them, from the least to the greatest of them, from man and beast — the king himself rising from his throne, and sitting in ashes, the place of death, and thus were they planted in the likeness of His death. And not only so, but they break off their sins by righteousness, and walk in newness of life, and thus were planted also in the likeness of His resurrection. This was repenting at the preaching of Jonah, or answering the sign of Jonah; then the Lord bids mercy to rejoice against judgment in their behalf, as He had in Jonah's: He repents of the evil which He had said He would do unto them, and He did it not, as He had brought Jonah again on the dry land out of the whale's belly.

Thus was "the sign of Jonah" answered in and by the Ninevites, and so must it be in Israel, that generation to which Jesus preached. And part of the sign is already witnessed in them. Sentence of death was, in principle, passed on them, when Jesus rose from the dead. But they have not yet heard it, and bowed their heads under it. To this day they are buried out of sight, in the grave where is no remembrance of them with God (Isa. 26: 19; Ezek. 37; Hosea 13). They are as dry bones in the valley, or as a tree in the dead and leafless winter season (Isa. 6: 13), because they have not repented. And there is no hope for them, but the repentance of the Ninevites. They must bow their heads under the punishment of their sins as the Ninevites did. The sign of Jonah, or of the Son of man, must be fully answered in them, as the sign of Jonas was in the Ninevites. It is not as yet so answered, and thus the Ninevites still judge them. But we know that it will be by-and-bye. As Jonah's sin has been the sign of Israel's sin, so will his repentance be of their repentance. They will mourn every family apart, and their wives apart. In their affliction they will seek the Lord, and say, "come, and let us return to the Lord, for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up; after two days He will revive us; in the third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight." They will thus identify themselves, in spirit, with the death and resurrection of their Lord; and then He will open their graves, and bring them up out of their graves, and say, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise, Awake, and sing ye that dwell in dust" (Isa. 26; Ezek. 37; Hosea 6). And then will "the sign of Jonah" be answered also in Israel, as it was answered in Nineveh.

It is death and resurrection which both Jonah and the Son of man signify; and death and resurrection is God's principle in a world where the power of death has entered. The ancient penalty "in the day thou eatest thou shalt die," has never been rescinded. Every thing in some form or another has suffered it; and it has been met with infinite value for us by the Son of God. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;" and Jesus has met this appointment. Death had its way against Him, and judgment, the judgment of sin, was upon Him. His soul was made an offering for sin; but by death He destroyed him that had the power of death, and rose with new life for those who had been subject to his bondage.

This was glorious triumph over all the strength of the enemy; and this was also the entire vindication of God. And all now that has any rest, must rest on this death and resurrection of the Son of God; and all that has life to God, or that will have any place in His system of glory by and bye, must have both in the death and resurrection character. Death and resurrection may introduce to different order and departments of glory, but it is the common entrance to them all. The leprous man and the leprous house in Israel were to be cleansed by the same ordinance of the slain and the living birds. Of course the man was more worthy than the house; but the Lord of Israel esteemed the house as well as the man a fit subject for the great reconciliation. Atonement was to be made for the one as well as for

the other (Lev. 14: 53). Both were equally liable to the taint of leprosy; but the very same provision was made for the cleansing of both, and for the restoring of both, to their several places in God's system in Israel. And that was an ordinance which vividly, and without controversy, sets forth the virtues of the death and resurrection of the Son of God.

This, I do judge, is very striking: — God's care for the house as well as for the man. And here I may observe that the principle of the divine procedure is always the principle of the conduct of faith. As it is written, "be ye followers (imitators) of God as dear children" (Eph. 5: 1). It is, therefore, as thus being God's principle — His necessary principle, we may say to His praise, in a death-stained world, that death and resurrection are so often illustrated in the histories of God's servants. We find it more or less through all the line of the Old Testament worthies, as I may call them. Abel and Seth together present death and resurrection. Noah was carried, through the region of death and judgment, into the place of life that lay beyond it. Abraham had the promises, and was heir of all the land; but he walked in the place as a stranger and pilgrim, not having so much as to set his foot on. Joseph was to stand above his brethren; but he is first cast into the pit and then into the dungeon, as under sentence of death, till at length he rises into the glories of Egypt, which, mystically, were the heavenly and earthly glories of the kingdom. Moses was "drawn out" from the place of destruction, and afterwards as a dead and risen man, like our Jonah, preaches to his brethren (Ex. 2: 13); and again, after another burial as it were, in Midian, rises a second time to be the redeemer of Israel. David came forth from contempt and obscurity to be the slayer of the giant and the deliverer of Israel; and again, as from death in the wilderness, to rule the land as God's king in Zion.

And among all these, and others like them, we may especially notice Job among the patriarchs. Death and resurrection was the lesson he had to learn in his own soul, and to illustrate before us in his history. He had to take the sentence of death in himself, that he might not trust in himself but in Him that raises the dead, and gives brighter glory at the end than at the beginning.

In all these distinguished witnesses of God and His ways we see this principle exhibited as God's principle. And so it is, from the Son of God in the highest, down to the lowest orders in creation — all stand or are to stand before God as dead and risen, that the power of the enemy may be gloriously overthrown, and the holy honour of His own name, "the living God," be vindicated for ever.

And scripture thus teaches us this.-

1. — The Lord Himself is to take all His glories, as the One that was dead and is alive again. He is the Head of the church, the Heir of the sure mercies of David, and the Lord of creation as the Second Man, by this title (Col. 1: 18; Acts 13: 34; Heb. 2: 6-9). The thought of this His title to every thing passed across the mind of Jesus when the Greeks, the Gentiles, came to the feast desiring to see Him. He then owned that but for His death He could take nothing (John 12: 24).

2. — The church has her peculiar life and glory in this way also. The saints were all dead in trespasses and sins, but have also been quickened together with Christ and raised up, and seated on high in Him; and by and by are, in body, to be fashioned after the likeness of His risen or glorious body (Eph. 2, Phil. 3).

3. — Israel, as we have already noticed, are to stand in the same character, brought from their graves, and raised up as those that had slept in dust.

4. — The nations will be, after Israel's revival, as "life from the dead" (Rom. 11: 15), as the Ninevites repent and come into blessing after Jonah himself is raised up. Indeed it is as the dead and risen one, that Jerusalem will be the mother of them all. The "barren," the "widow," the "desolate," is to

have many more children than she which had a husband (Isa. 54).

5. — The creation itself will, in the "world to come," return to rest and beauty, as after the dead and wintry season of "this present evil world." The world to come will in principle be a risen world, the risen Son of man having it all in subjection under Him. Now it is all groaning and travailing in pain, but it shall be delivered into glorious liberty. (Rom. 8)

Thus is death and resurrection the great rule of all blessing and glory; and this is the sign of Jonah and of the Son of man, and God's pervading principle through the ranks and departments of this death-tainted system of ours. And, beloved, it was the apostle's purpose, and should be ours, to know more and more of the power of this principle. (Phil. 3) In Christ we are already apprehended for the full fruit of His death and resurrection; but we should be as though we had not ourselves apprehended it. In Him we are complete and perfect, but we should be as though we had not attained neither were already perfect. Liberty and holiness, joy in the Lord, and life in the Spirit, would then flourish together in our souls, as wellwatered gardens.

To teach this, as God's great principle with every thing, is the purpose, I judge, of the history of Jonah the prophet. I have hitherto followed it to the close of the third chapter, seeing the death and resurrection both of the Jewish prophet and of the Gentile city. And that is the formal close of the book. The fourth chapter then comes as a kind of moral or appendix.

But on opening this deeply interesting chapter, let me observe, beloved, that we have, each one of us, to do with the Lord as well in the secrecy of His own presence within, as in the activities of His service abroad. We may have run the appointed course, and done the Lord's business, but this is not all. The Lord may still have many a personal question with us, and have to speak with us in the cool of the day. There may have been many a taint in the spirit of the service within, while without all may have seemed as splendid and devoted as the mission of a prophet to the first city of the Gentiles. And these will have at the end, to be brought before the Lord. Workings in the heart, hidden from the eye of man, will then have to be brought fully under the eye and ear of God.

It is so now with our prophet. Nineveh had been visited of Jonah, but Jonah must now be visited of the Lord, — not to destroy, we know full well, but to chasten and humble, and thus to make him more and more partaker of the divine holiness. He had done the service abroad. He had gone the way of Nineveh, and fulfilled the word of the Lord there. But there is still a question for the presence of God as yet unsettled. There were lustings within that must now be brought forth and made a show of openly. He is still, as we find here, angry because of mercy to the Gentiles,* and he goes outside the city of Nineveh, and sits down there a homeless exposed stranger all in sorrow and displeasure, saying, "It is better for me to die than to live." There he makes himself a booth to sit under, and the Lord then comes, in the secret of His own presence, to talk with him of his sin. He prepares a gourd to come up over his head, and be a shadow to deliver him from his grief. But He scarcely allows him to find comfort in the gourd, ere He prepares a worm to smite it and wither it, and then a vehement east wind and the sun to heat upon the head of Jonah, till again in anger and displeasure he says as before, "it is better for me to die than to live."

*I need not, I assume, prove that I am warranted in treating Nineveh as the representative of the Gentiles. It was, we know, the capital of that kingdom which was, in Jonah's day, the chief power in the world.

Then the Lord catches him in the toils which He had now woven around him in consummate and divine skill. He convicts him out of his own mouth, and makes his own words correct him. He shows him that he cannot retain both his proud and his angry sorrows. He must cease either to grieve for

mercy to Nineveh, or for judgment on the gourd. If he will give up his anger because of the withered gourd, let him do so. But if he still judge it well to be angry on that account, as he says he does, even unto death, then he must cease to be angry, because of preserved Nineveh; for Nineveh was to the Lord just what the gourd had been to the prophet, and if the prophet would fain spare the gourd, he must allow the Lord to spare Nineveh. "Thou hast had pity on the gourd," says the Lord to him, "for the which thou hast not laboured, neither makest it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city wherein are more than six-score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?"

With these words the Lord ends, leaving that claim of His to Nineveh, its little ones and its cattle, upon the heart and conscience of Jonah. The echo, as it were, of those sweet words is left in our ears, as we close this beautiful little book.

But however these words may have wrought on the prophet, as we may judge and hope they did with power, we have our blessed interest in them, and our exceeding great and precious comfort by them. For from this moral or parabolic action between the Lord and His servant, we learn that the Lord's desire is still to the works of His hands, that He would fain be refreshed and rest again in the creatures which He, of old, fashioned and made. He made them at the beginning for His glory and delight. For a moment He was allowed, so to speak, to rejoice in them. He looked on everything that He had made, and beheld it to be all very good (Gen. 1: 31). He took His sabbath in His creatures, and walked with man in a garden of delight that was in the midst of them.

But all was soon beguiled from Him. The worm at the root of God's own gourd withered it. He that, had the power of death did this, and left the Lord, as it were, a homeless stranger in His own creation (like Jonah outside Nineveh), a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry but for a night.

But they are still His creatures, and His desire is toward them. He seeks them all for Himself, the little ones and the cattle, as well as the cities and their people. All form to Him what the foliage of the gourd formed to the prophet, a shade and refreshing, where without it all is homelessness and exposure. And He would fain take His rest, His sabbath in creation again, as He here would have Jonah and all of us know.

And He will do it. He will accomplish the desire of His heart, for who can let Him? He will reconcile all things unto Himself by Jesus Christ. Israel and the nations shall revive and dwell in peace; the earth shall yield her increase, the hills, the floods, and the trees of the wood rejoicing before Jehovah the King; and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea making His name excellent in all the earth. For He has said of them, when the Branch grows out of Jesse's roots, "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them, and the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isa. 11: 1-7). He pronounced them all good at their creation, the living creatures which the waters brought forth, the winged fowl, the cattle and the creeping things, as well as man. As here He would have Jonah knew that He valued them, and would spare them and have them, as well as Nineveh and its people.

And of this final redemption and joy of the creatures we have had many pledges. Noah carried them, "two of every sort," with himself and his household through the waters into the new world; and the same covenant, which settled him and his seed after him in it, provided equally for them (Gen. 9: 10). Joseph purchased all the cattle as well as the people of Egypt for Pharaoh (Gen. 47: 17). Moses redeemed them all out of Egypt afterwards, when it had corrupted itself, and was no longer the land of Joseph's glory (Ex. 10: 26, 12: 38); and he sanctified them all, under the law, to Jehovah, the fruit of the

land and of the cattle, as well as the fruit of man, thus showing us that Jehovah claimed the whole system as His own (Ex. 12: 28, 29; Lev. 19: 23-25). The first-born of beast as of man was sanctified to Himself (Num. 8: 17). Jesus claimed lordship of them all, the beasts of the field, and the fish of the sea, and they owned His dominion (Matt. 17, 21) and in the coming kingdom, they shall still own Him, for all shall be in subjection to Him, and join in the joy of redemption, beasts and all cattle praising the Lord (Ps. 148: 10; Heb. 2: 8; Rev. 5: 13.)

These are sweet pledges of the Lord's value for His creatures, and that He will still clothe Himself with them all. And of this His care for them and His desire toward them He here speaks to Jonah. And He does more than that. He lets Jonah further learn that He had laboured for them; that, unlike Jonah and His gourd, He would bring back His creatures to Him at the cost of His own toil (Jonah 4: 10). And so we know it is. For "all things" are to be a part of that great reconciled system, for which the blood of His dear Son has been shed; as at the beginning they were all a part of that great created system, for which the six days' work was entered on.

It is our joy, beloved, to know this, — to know that the blessed God still values all His creatures, and has, so to speak, "laboured" for them, and paid a price for them. The ancient scene of His delight and glory may be disturbed and defiled, as we know it is; but as He once rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, so will He again; and as He once had the image of His dominion and glory over them all, so will He again in the Son of man and in "the world to come." The Lord did indeed of old take His joy in them, as I have noticed, and His glory was displayed by them. Every succeeding evening and morning witnessed His joy, for then He paused and lingered over His works, as they grew under His hand, that He might see them and pronounce them to be good, according to the desire and good pleasure of His own will; and when all were made, He looked at them all together as good, and took His fall sabbath in them. And the morning stars sang their joy and His praise. Then was His gourd a sweet and refreshing gourd to Him, as Jonah's at the first. But a worm began soon to work at the root. For all this rested on Adam, and Adam was beguiled by him that had the power of death. Tares were then sown in the Lord's fair field of fruits and flowers. An enemy did that. But so it was, and the Lord had to repent that He had made man in the earth. Then did He look a second time at the work of His hands, and, behold, it was corrupt; and it repented Him that He had made it, and it grieved Him at His heart (Gen. 6: 6). Then the gourd of the Lord became the withered gourd indeed. But His creatures are still His. The field does not belong to the enemy, though he may waste and defile it for a season; and the gourd must flourish and bud again to reward the toil of Him Who has laboured for it. And it will then put forth a more fragrant smell than ever. Creation shall return to the Lord, to give Him more joy and more praise than ever.

He will joy in it as in the hand of One in Whom His soul delighteth, and by it not merely the skill of His hand but the riches of His love shall be praised. To Him as well as to us shall the eater then yield meat, and the strong man sweetness. The blood of Jesus shall efface the trail of the serpent. That will give "all things" in "the reconciliation," a sweet smelling savour with our God, and over such a sacrifice, He can say, in the deep satisfaction of His heart, "I will not again curse the ground for man's sake" (Gen. 8: 21).

And of this we have had early notice in the history of Noah. When Adam was created, he received a command to replenish the earth and subdue it. But we do not read of the way in which he owned his Creator in the midst of all this blessing, nor did the Lord God then say, that He would not curse the ground which He had made. But when Noah came forth of the ark, as man redeemed (not like Adam merely created) for the earth, he at once takes the earth as debtor to the blood of Jesus for it. He raises his altar and offers upon it of every clean beast and of every clean fowl; and the blood of these

victims (in type the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God) the Lord smells as a savour of sweet smell, and it awakens in His heart thoughts of abiding complacency in the earth. The blood on the altar, and not the evil of man, governs His counsels, and they are all counsels of grace (Gen. 8: 21). And then He again gives Noah dominion of the earth, with the sign of the covenant of abiding complacency in the earth and its creatures, signifying that by the virtue of this blood, though not before in the hand of Adam, the creation could be established without fear or curse again. And then He gives Noah also, not only the herb of the field, but the flesh of every thing that lived to be meat for him (Gen. 9: 3), in token that his life now rested on the flesh and blood of another, that it was no longer the life of a creature merely, but of a creature redeemed, and redeemed by blood. Thus both he and his inheritance now stood only in the value of the blood of Jesus; but, standing in that, they stood secure.

All this was very significant, telling us of the character of that kingdom which is to arise in the last days, when the true Noah takes the dominion. Then shall the earth and its creatures be established in the covenant of abiding rest and certainty, the rainbow encircling the throne that is then to rule over all. And then shall the Lord God rest in His full complacency in it all, for it shall all stand in the sweet savour of the sacrifice which the Son of His love has offered, i.e. in the great reconciliation. As it is written, "and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, by Him I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven" (Col. 1: 20).

And thus will God's praise and delight spring from the same source which gives us sinners our everlasting security, and puts a richer and sweeter song into our lips than that which awakened the morning stars, when the foundations of the old creation were laid. Such is the divine skill, weaving God's glory and our security together, and His delights with our delights for ever His own grace must account for this, for nothing else can, passing (as it does), all the fondest thoughts of our hearts. And then this redeemed creation, this gourd of our God, shall bud again, and be still in its freshness before Him. The worm, the power of death, shall not touch it to wither it; but under its shadow will He find His sabbath again, as it is written, "thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, the Lord shall rejoice in His works" (Ps. 104: 30, 31).

"Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man that thou makest account of him?"