

Job

James 5: 11.

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Section 7 of: **The Patriarchs: Being Meditations upon Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job; The Canticles, Heaven and Earth.**

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"Behind a frowning providence

He hides a smiling face"

May surely be said, upon the reading of this deeply affecting story. Said, too, with peculiar fitness and fulness of truth, as though the thought of the Christian poet had been suggested by the tale of the inspired historian. The frown was specially dark and lowering, the smile behind it brilliantly beaming and happy. The veil was very thick, but the glory within very bright. The boastings of the Lord in His servant were above the noise of all the water-floods.

"The bud may have a bitter taste,

But sweet will be the flower"

may as surely be the motto for the story also. For let us wait only for a little, and the fruit of the travail will be precious beyond all expectation. Very bitter indeed was the bud, but very sweet indeed was the flower. It had to ripen under the pruning of the sprigs and the taking away of the branches (Isaiah 18: 5), but it tells, in the end, the skill and patience of its divine husbandman. I would, however, rather trace some of the principles of this beautiful Book, than thus at the beginning more largely anticipate the moral of it.

Resurrection, called by the Lord "the power of God," or, at least, one of the ways of that power (Matthew 22: 29), has been made known, through different witnesses, and in divers manners, from the very beginning. And connected as it is with redemption, the great principle of God's way and the secret of His purposes, it must have been so.

It was intimated in the creation of the beautiful scene around us, for the world itself was called forth from the grave of the deep. The material was without form, and darkness was upon the face of it, but light was commanded to shine out of darkness, and beauty and order were caused to arise. See Hebrews 11: 3.

It declared itself in the formation of Eve. Then again in the earliest promise about the bruised Seed of the woman. It was kept in memory in Seth given in the place of Abel whom Cain slew; and then again in the line of the fathers before the flood. But still more illustriously was it published in Noah. "Every thing in the earth shall die," says the Lord to him, "but with thee will I establish my covenant;" thus disclosing the secret, that the earth was to be established according to the purpose of God, as in resurrection, stability, and beauty.

So, after these earlier fathers, Abraham was to have both a family and an inheritance on the same principle. He and his generations after him were taught resurrection in the mystery of the barren woman keeping house. The covenant blessing was linked with the risen family. Ishmael may get

possessions, and promises too, but the covenant was with Isaac.

And more marvellously still, not to pause longer over other witnesses of it, we see resurrection in the blessed history of "the Word made flesh." We might indeed have forejudged that it would have been otherwise. For in Christ, flesh was without taint. Here was a holy thing." But even of such we have now to say, Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." Christ known by us now is Christ in resurrection. And this is enough to let us know assuredly, that resurrection is the principle of all the divine action, and the secret of the covenant.*

*All orders of His creatures in all places of His dominions witness Him as the living God; but in the history of redeemed sinners He is witnessed as the living God in victory. This is His glory; and resurrection should be prized by us as the display of it. The sepulchre with the grave-clothes lying in order, and the napkin which had been about the head, are the trophies of such victory. John 20: 6, 7. The history of redeemed sinners celebrates Him thus. To hesitate about resurrection is to betray ignorance of God, and of the power that is His. See Matthew 22: 29; 1 Cor. 15: 34.

But resurrection has also been, from the beginning, an article of the faith of God's people; and, being such, it was also the lesson they had to learn and to practise, the principle of their life; because the principle of a divine dispensation is ever the rule and character of the saints' conduct. The purchase and occupation of the burying field at Machpelah, tell us that the Genesis-fathers had learnt the lesson. Moses learnt and practised it, when he chose affliction with the people of God, having respect to the recompense of the reward. David was in the power of it, when he made the covenant, or resurrection-promise, all his salvation and all his desire, though his house, his present house, was not to grow. 2 Sam. 23. The whole nation of Israel were taught it, again and again, by their prophets, and by-and-by they will learn it, and then witness it to the whole world, the dry bones living again, the winter-beaten teil tree flourishing again; for "what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" The Lord Jesus, "the Author and Finisher of faith," in His day, I need not say, practised this lesson to all perfection. And each of us, His saints and people, is set down to it every day, that we "may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings."

By the life of faith the elders obtained a good report. And so the saints in every age. For "without faith it is impossible to please Him;" that faith which trusts Him as a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, which respects the unseen and the future. They, of whom the world was not worthy, practised the life of faith, the life of dead and risen people. Hebrews 11. Stephen before the council tells us the same. Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, in his account, were great witnesses of this same life; and he himself, at that moment, after the pattern of his master, Jesus, was exhibiting the strength and virtues of it, through the power of the Holy Ghost, and apprehending, through the same Spirit, the brightest joys and glories of it. Acts 7.

Now, I believe that the leading purpose of the Book of Job is to exhibit this. It is the story of an elect one, in early patriarchal days, a child of resurrection, set down to learn the lesson of resurrection. His celebrated confession tells us that resurrection was understood by him as a doctrine, while the whole story tells us, that he had still to know the power of it in his soul. It was an article of his faith, but not the principle of his life.

And a sore lesson it was to him, hard indeed to learn and digest. He did not like (and which of us does like?) to take the sentence of death into himself, that he might not trust in himself, or in his circumstances in life, or his condition by nature, but in God who raises the dead. "I shall die in my nest," was his thought and his hope. But he was to see his nest rifled of all with which nature had filled it, and with which circumstances had adorned it.

Such is, I believe, the leading purpose of the Spirit of God in this Book. This honoured and cherished saint had to learn the power of the calling of all the elect, practically and personally, the life of faith, or the lesson of resurrection. And it may be a consolation for us, beloved, who know ourselves to be little among them, to read, in the records which we have of them, that all have not been equally apt and bright scholars in that school, and that all, in different measures, have failed in it, as well as made attainments in it.

How unworthily of it, for instance, did Abraham behave, how little like a dead and risen man, a man of faith, when he denied his wife to the Egyptian, and yet how beautifully did he carry himself, as such, when he surrendered the choice of the land to his younger kinsman. And even our own Apostle, the aptest scholar in the school, the constant witness of this calling to others, and the energetic disciple of the power of it in his own soul, in a moment when the fear of man brought with it a snare, makes this very doctrine the covert of a guileful thought. Acts 23: 6.

Encouragements and consolations visit the soul from all this. Happy is it to know, that our present lesson, as those who are dead, and whose life is hid with Christ in God, has been the lesson of the elect from the beginning — that on many a bright and hallowed occasion they practised that lesson to the glory of their Lord, that at times they found it hard, and at times failed in it. This tale of the soul is well understood by us. Only we, living in New Testament times, are set down to learn the same lesson in the still ampler page, and after the clearer method, in which it is now taught us in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is some difference, let me observe, nay, I would say, distance, between a *righteous* and a *devoted* man. No saint is a devoted one, who has not been practising this lesson of which I have been speaking. The measure of his devotedness may be said to be according to his attainment in it, according to the energy he is exercising as a man dead and risen with Christ. At the beginning of this history, Job was a righteous man. He was spoken well of again and again, in the very face of his accuser. But he was not a devoted man. The whisper of his heart, as I noticed before, was this, "I shall die in my nest." Accepted he was, as a sinner who knew his living and triumphant Redeemer, godly and upright beyond his fellows, but withal, as to the power that wrought in his soul, he was not a dead and risen man.

Such also, I might add, was Agur in the Book of Proverbs. He was godly, and of a lowly, self-judging spirit. He makes a good confession of human blindness and pravity, of the unsearchable glories of God, the purity and preciousness of His word, and of the security of all who trust in Him. Prov. 30: 1-9. He was a man of God, and walked in a good spirit. But he was not a devoted man. He did not know how to abound and how to suffer need. He dreaded poverty lest he should steal, and riches lest he should deny God. He was not prepared for changes. Neither was Job. But Paul was. He had surrendered himself to Christ, as they had not. According to the power that wrought in his soul, Paul was a dead and risen man. He was ready to be "emptied from vessel to vessel." He was instructed both to be full and to be hungry. He could do all things through Christ strengthening him. See that devoted man, that dead and risen man, in the closing chapters of Acts. 20 - 28. He is in the midst of a weeping company of brethren at Miletus, and in the bosom of a loving Christian household at Tyre. But were those, the greenest spots on earth to a saint, where if any where, the foot of the mystic ladder is felt to rest, and the fond heart lingers and says, Let us make tabernacles here, able to detain him? No. Even there, the dear, devoted Apostle carried a heart thoroughly surrendered to Christ. "What mean ye," says he, "to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." He would not be kept. And on from thence he goes, along the coast of Syria up to Jerusalem, and then for two long years, apart from brethren, in perils by

sea and land, under insults and wrongs, a single heart and devoted affection bearing him through all.

A good conscience alone is not up to all this. Mere righteousness will not take such a journey. There must be that singleness of eye to Christ, that principle of devotedness, which reckons upon death and resurrection with Jesus. Job was righteous, but he was not prepared for such shifting scenery as this. He loved the green spot and the feathered nest. Changes come, and changes are too much for him. But God, in the love wherewith He loved him, as his heavenly Father, puts him to school, to learn the lesson of a child of resurrection, to be a partaker of "His holiness," the holiness not merely of a right or pure-minded man, but *the holiness that suits the call of God*, the holiness of a dead and risen man, one of the pilgrim family, one of God's strangers in the world. Heb. 12: 9, 10.

Job was chastened to be partaker of such a holiness as this. Not that trials and troubles, like his, are essential to the learning of this lesson. A very common method it is, indeed, with our heavenly Father, in His wisdom. But Paul set himself daily to practise that lesson, without the instructions of griefs and losses in either body or estate. Phil. 3. In the fervent labourings of the spirit within, he exercised himself in it every day. And so should we. We are to dread the Laodicean state, satisfaction with present condition or attainment. The Laodicean was not a Pharisee, or a self-righteous man of religion. He was a professor, it may be, of very correct notions and judgments, but in a spirit of self-complacency, he did not cherish increasing freshness and vigour in the ways of the Lord.

Arise, depart; for this is not your rest, says the Spirit by the Prophet. And why? Why is it not to be our rest? "It is polluted," he adds. He does not say it is sorrowful, it is disappointing, it is unsatisfying, but it is polluted. The quickened soul is to gather from the *moral* and not from the *circumstances* of the scene here, its reasons for cherishing within it the power of Christ's resurrection. The dove outside the ark did not fear the snare of the fowler, but found no rest for the sole of her foot on the unpurged ground.

It is humbling to sit down and delineate what has been so poorly reached in personal power. But "a beautiful light" may be seen "from far," and as such, some of us decry and hail the virtues of the risen life.

A dead and risen man will have neither his springs nor his *objects* here. His principles of action will be found in Christ, and his expectations in the coming kingdom. He is taken out of all the advantages and adornings of the flesh into the righteousness of God, and then, livingly and practically, is struggling up the hill, having, in spirit, left the low level of the world, abating the force of nature, and the fascination of nature's circumstances, and taking the affections from things on earth to give them to those which are with Christ above. He has lost himself, but he has won Christ. He has taken leave of the course of the world which goes its rounds on the plain beneath, and is ascending after Jesus.

He lets the world know that it could never provide him with his object. In the midst of its kingdoms and delights he is a stranger still. And virtues and qualities of heart he practises that are of like divine excellence. He can, like his Master, hide the glory to which God has appointed him, and be nothing in the present scene. Abraham did not tell every Canaanite whom he chanced to meet, that he was the heir of the country. In the ears of the children of Heth he said, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you." He was content to be, and (what is still harder) to be thought to be, a homeless, houseless man. So David, another of the dead and risen family, when hunted and driven by the evil thing then in power, though the oil of Samuel was upon him, God's own consecration to the throne, he did not publish it. That was the secret and the joy of faith. But he did not publish it. He did not traffic with it among men — he did not talk of himself in connection with that which the world could value. He was

rather, in his own reckoning before men, no better than "a dead dog" or "a flea."

Oh, precious faith! Oh, holy and triumphant faith! But this was an elevation which Job had to reach. He was not, according to the power which wrought in his soul, of this generation. Not that his condition in life made him proud, or self-indulgent, or indifferent to others. But he *valued* his condition. With what eloquence does he describe it. Chapter 29. The minuteness with which he remembers it tells us with what fondness he had embraced it. The eloquence with which he describes it (and nothing can exceed that) betrays with what fervour of heart he had lingered over it, in the day of its bloom and beauty. He loved his condition and circumstances in life, his place, his character, his estimation, his dignities and praise among men. Godly he was, truly and admirably so. There was none like him in the earth. But his place in the earth was important to him. He was largely ready to communicate and to serve, but he communicated and served as a patron or a benefactor. And he desired continuance. "I shall multiply my days as the sand," was his calculation. Hence the great end of his trial, and the purpose of recording it. For this Book gives us the story of a saint in patriarchal days, or rather, the story of his trials, trials through which he was to learn the common lesson, according to the common calling, that we are a dead and risen people. Job came, I believe, before Abraham, but he did not come before this lesson; for it had been taught, as we have seen, from the beginning; Adam and Abel, and the line of Seth through Enoch and Noah, had already practised it. And Job, after them, is set down to the same lesson, only engraven in somewhat deeper and darker lines.

Such, generally, I believe, was Job, and such his history. A solitary saint he was; at least, not linked with dispensational arrangements, or with the peculiar covenanted family, and before the call of God was manifested in the person of Abraham. This, however, adds exceeding value to the Book. For it is, thus, a witness of the religion of God's people in the most detached and independent condition. Time and place do not connect him with the ecclesiastical order or course of things at all. But still, the faith of the elect of God was his faith, their truths his truths, their calling his calling, their hopes his hopes. We have Adam, and Seth, and Noah, and Shem, and Job, and Abraham, Moses, Prophets, Apostles, and ourselves, till the number of the elect be accomplished, learning the joy and the song of redemption. As we sometimes sing together

"Then shall countless myriads, wearing
Robes made white in Jesu's blood,
Palms (like rested pilgrims) bearing,
Stand around the throne of God.
These, redeemed from every nation,
Shall in triumph bless His Name;
Every voice shall cry, 'Salvation
To our God and to the Lamb.'"

Not only, however, the substance or materials, but the very style of the Book is in the analogy of the whole inspired volume. It does not teach doctrines formally, after the method of a science; it rather assumes them, or lets them publish themselves incidentally. Even in the Epistles this is the common way. The great revelation of doctrines made there comes out, more commonly, in the way of either enforcing results, or in answer to inquiries, or in defence of truth against gainsayers or corrupters. So in this Book doctrines are assumed, or delivered incidentally; the more direct object, as I have

suggested, being this — to exhibit a soul set to learn, through trials and sorrows, the common lesson, the power of our calling, that our hopes are neither in the world, nor from the flesh, but in living scenes, with Jesus, beyond all that is here.

And deeply affecting as a narrative of trying and sorrowing events it surely is, for the events themselves are deeply touching. But they are all ordinary, or such as are "common to man." Robbers carry off his oxen and asses. Lightning destroys his flocks. A high wind blows down his house, and kills his children. And, at last, a sore disease breaks out on his body from head to foot.

Each of these might have happened to his ungodly neighbour, as well as to him. In the mere matter of these afflictions, there was nothing that distinguished him as a child of God. They were not the sufferings of righteousness from the hand of man, the sufferings of a martyr. They were such as were "common to man." But still they were all under the exactest inspection and admeasurement of his heavenly Father, all in the way of appointment and of discipline flowing from heavenly interests, and divine relationships. And all, too, the result of great transactions in heaven. For Satan had been there, accusing Job, and the Lord had been boasting of him; and the Lord had licensed Satan to go against Job, with a quiver full of arrows, but had appointed him his measure and rule.

And this is very comforting. For many a child of God is troubled, in the day of affliction, with the thought that his trial is commonplace, and no witness at all that he is not "as other men." But such trouble is mistaken. In the shape or material of the affliction, the believer may be just in company with other men, it is true. The same storm on the distant sea, or the same disease at home, may have bereaved them alike; but faith takes account of the relationship with God, and of the interest which all that concerns a poor saint awakens in heaven.

In the wisdom of God, in the construction of this beautiful story (true as I know it to be in every incident that it records), it is made to introduce all the great actors in the divine mystery, and to reveal the great truths which form the common faith of the elect.

This is much to be prized; for this declares the perfect harmony of all, even the most distant and independent, portions of the oracles of God. Accordingly, we see engaged in the action of this Book the *angels* who minister to the divine pleasure; *Satan* the great adversary; *the elect sinner* whose faith is cast into the furnace; *his brethren* in the faith; *the minister of God* in the energy of the Holy Ghost; and *the Lord God Himself*.

These are the actors in the wondrous scenery of this Book; so that while the action itself is simply the trial of a saint, it is so constructed as to bring forth all these great agents and energies, the very same with which our souls are conversant to this hour, occupied, also, in the ways and places which the whole of Scripture assigns to them. And it is a matter of the richest interest to our souls to trace this.

Thus the angels or "sons of God" are here seen for a moment or two, but exactly in the place and action which the general consent of all Scripture gives them. They are in attendance on the Lord in heaven, as those who had been forth, and were ready again to go forth, in the service of His good pleasure. For the whole Word thus bears witness to them. They are "ministering spirits," "ministers of His that do His pleasure." They are His hosts on high, and the Lord Himself is among them. Gabriel stands in His presence. The Seraphim attend His throne, and they are winged, either to veil their faces and their feet before the divine majesty, or to fly, like the wind, to execute the divine commands. All this is told of the angels throughout Scripture, and here the heavens are opened for a moment, and all this is seen and heard.

So as to Satan. This Book is in strictest analogy with the whole volume. "Messengers of Satan" go forth from the presence of God, as well as Gabriel and the hosts. "Lying spirits" as well as "ministering spirits" take their journey and their commission from thence. He goes about, says an apostle, seeking whom he may devour; as here, he says of himself, that he had been up and down, and to and fro, in the earth. Another apostle tells us, that he, with his principalities and powers, is in heavenly places; and here we find him among the sons of God, in the presence of God. And again; he desired to have all the apostles, that he might sift them as wheat, put them to the proof of what they were; and so here as to Job. Satan is elsewhere called "the accuser of the brethren," and here he is heard as such. He is the tormentor of this servant of God, as Scripture generally presents him; but, as Scripture also testifies, his action is under the limitations and sovereignty of God. Jesus, God manifest in the flesh; as He walked in the land of Israel, gave him his measure (Mark 5); and so Elohim from the throne does here, and the eye of the Seer and the voice of the Prophet assign him also exactly this place and action. 1 Kings 22; Zech. 3.*

These analogies are as strict and literal as they can be. And further — for it is edifying to trace this still — we find the patriarch in one school with the distant apostle of the Gentiles — so richly does one Spirit breathe through the whole volume. We are in the last chapters of 2 Corinthians, when reading the first chapters of the Book of Job! We have the "thorn in the flesh," "the messenger of Satan," in both Job and Paul.

*The children of light should reckon upon the attempts of the powers of darkness against them. A sudden moment of conflict should not therefore surprise us. For we are set to be the scene or theatre of their defeat by Christ. "It is our illumination" that exposes us. That is its proper natural operation. The more we are in the light, I may say, the more exposed we are. It was Adam's creature-beauty, Job's memorial with God, and the Apostle's attachment to Christ, that laid them open to Satan.

But let me add, that a "messenger of Satan" may be sent forth from the presence of God upon either *the flesh* or *the heart* of man. An evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul, and a lying spirit came upon the prophets of Ahab. 1 Sam. 16; 1 Kings 22. The Lord was beginning solemn acts of *judgment*, and, therefore, these messengers of Satan were sent forth upon the *heart* of those who were righteously under judgment. But other messengers of Satan reach only the *body* or *circumstances*, as in the case of Paul and of our patriarch. And this is *discipline* merely, and not judgment.

Then, as to Job and his friends, or the elect one whose faith is cast into the furnace, and his brethren in the faith. A very principal part of this patriarchal story is made up, as we commonly know, of the controversies that arose between them. Bitter and heated they were, in something more than the ordinary measure. But such things are still, and have been in every age.

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were friends and brethren indeed, though they proved to be but "miserable, comforters." They came to Job when all had deserted him, children mocking him, young men pushing away his feet, his kinsfolk failing him, his inward friends forgetting him, his servants giving him no answer, and his wife refusing him, though he entreated for their children's sake. They were true-hearted friends, who said that they would go and comfort their afflicted brother. And they did go; and they sat with him in his place of ashes and potsherds for seven days.

But they fell out by the way. *Sad* to tell it, but so it was; not *strange* to tell it, for so has it ever been, and so is it still. So early as the times of Abraham's herdmen and Lot's herdmen, this stands on record. Joseph had to say to his brethren, "See that ye fall not out by the way." Moses knew the trial of the *camp* even beyond that of the *wilderness*, as he went from Egypt to the Jordan. It was of His own that Jesus in His day had to say, How long shall I be with you and suffer you? And Paul counted "the

care of all the churches" the heaviest thing that came upon him.

Variety of temper, different measures of attainment, the quality of the light and the form of the kingdom in us, if I may so: express it, will occasion collision and trial, even where there is nothing morally wrong. But from whatever cause it be, so is it still, and so has it been from the days of Job and his friends, that we form a great part of each other's trial. The Lord sits over it all, refining His silver and purifying His gold, but still so it is, that we help to heat each other's furnace for the trial of faith.

Nothing, perhaps, has been a more common source of this falling out by the way, than the holding of favourite religious opinions, or an undue, disproportioned estimation of certain doctrines or points of truth. And this was the case here. Job prized certain points of truth, and his friends had their favourites also. But each "knew but in part," and darkened the perfect counsels of God. And by reason of this, they fell out by the way. Job, sorely afflicted by stroke upon stroke, insisted on it, that God acted *arbitrarily*; and having a right to do as He pleased, did so. His friends would have it, that God dealt *retributively*, and that therefore His way with Job convicted Job of some unconfessed iniquity. Their doctrines also very much savoured of human thoughts; they were not refined from the lees of man's religiousness. They drew much from the traditions of the elders, and from their own experiences and observations. They accredited that false though favourite axiom in the morals of the world, that "honesty is the best policy." "Who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" is the challenge which their religion published. "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. But He is of one mind, and who can turn Him?" is the counsel of his heart. They insinuate that if all were told, nothing would be too bad for him; and he reproaches them, in the contempt and bitterness of a wounded spirit, and an insulted character. "No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you."

Such was the strife of words, the bickering and debate, among them; as sad a sample of falling out by the way as has ever been known, I may say, among brethren.

Elihu, in whom was a "manifestation of the Spirit," at length enters the scene, bringing the light of God to make manifest these forms of darkness. He had listened to, the discourses and controversies of these brethren, but, in modesty and reserve, as became his years, in the presence of ancient men, he had hitherto held his peace. He waited till multitude of days, which should know wisdom, and speak of understanding, had delivered sentence of truth. But now he speaks. The stirrings of the Spirit constrain him. He is silent while it is a question between himself and them, but he durst not surrender the rights of the Spirit in him. He cannot respect any man's person now. In Job's day, God chose the weak thing, as He has done ever since. Elihu was but a youth. Timothy was the same. But the ancient men had failed. The stone of help lies in another stripling of Bethlehem. For, from beginning to end it must be known, that the good that is done upon the earth, He doeth Himself. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Eliphaz and his companions shall not have it to say, "We have found out wisdom;" for "God thrusteth him down, not man," said Elihu of Job.

Job was to be rebuked. He had argued the arbitrariness of the divine hand in dealing with man, and, accounting for his present sufferings in that way, he was so far "righteous in his own eyes." Elihu shows that this was not so; that all was the holy discipline of One who, knowing the end from the beginning, ever counsels the best for His people. Nor will he, like the others, draw either from himself, or from the elders or fathers. He will not, in the way of human religiousness, bow to any names or traditions, however venerated, but, led of the Spirit, press on in the path where the light of God shines.

Elihu will not join in laying to Job's charge what his conscience truthfully resisted. But he will

tell Job that the thoughts of conscience are not to rule his judgment, or dictate his speeches; that he should rather have allowed the divine wisdom in all this sore discipline, than concluded on the divine arbitrariness in it, just because conscience was clear. He tells Job this should have been his word — "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach Thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

"A mighty maze," philosophy will say, "but not without a plan." "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain," a Christian poet will say. And a true and beautiful thought that is. But inspired wisdom counsels and teaches thus — "Although thou sayest thou shalt not see Him, yet judgment is before Him; therefore trust thou in Him." Job 35: 14. For we are to know that purposes of wisdom and goodness rule every event, though another day has so to declare it. "Judgment" is ever "before Him," as Elihu says. And God is to be justified in the thoughts of His children now, as He will be in the face of heaven and earth by-and-by. Matt. 11: 19; Ps. 51: 4. Ps. 50: 4.

Such an one was Elihu. And it is a circumstance full of meaning and of moral beauty, that Job does not answer him, as he had the others. Elihu invited him to speak if he would. But he had a moral sense, a conscience in the Holy Ghost, that witnessed to the authority with which this minister of the Spirit spake. Very precious this is. How often, how common, among the saints, is this! Yea, and even beyond their borders, at times, the like authority is felt. How often has the presence of a holy man controlled the ungodly. The multitudes in the villages of Israel, after this manner, owned the Lord at times. They "were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them, as one having authority, and not as the scribes." And the want of this is painful. Have we not often, beloved, been grieved to see the heart and understanding of others unmoved by that which has come to our own souls with all the authority of truth, and in the freshness of the divine unction? But Job gives us not this pain. And a man very dear to the saints he is, as he was to the blessed Lord who was thus afflicting him. Elihu had spoken to him in the Spirit, and his soul bowed to the authority of his word. He could not treat Elihu as he had treated Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. He may not be as yet humbled, but he cannot be angry; he may not as yet make confession, but he will not reply. The Spirit of God in the ministry of His servant had entered the scene' and Job will at least be silent.*

*The knowledge of truth alone will never ensure happy or profitable ministry. If we draw merely from our stores or possessions of knowledge, we shall find ourselves confounded. The freshness of the Spirit in us, and the exercise of our gift under Him, at the time of ministry, are also needful.

The Lord, however, is He that teacheth to profit. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all in all. Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but it is God that giveth the increase. And, in analogy with these truths, the action of this beautiful Book proceeds. The voice of God from the whirlwind makes the testimony of the gifted minister effectual to the conscience and heart of Job. In a series of challenges as to natural things, that voice, mighty and yet gracious, addresses him. It has been said, by those competent to entertain such inquiries, that nothing in the whole compass of language can equal, much less surpass, the inimitable grandeur and sublimity of this address. And we can all see that it does that which it belongs to divine power to do — the complainant is humbled. "I know that Thou canst do everything." He confesses to Him whose mighty hand could exalt him in due time, and, after he had suffered awhile, was well able to strengthen, settle, and stablish him. 1 Peter 5.

It was not the lesson of a sinner which Job had to learn. He knew already the grace of God. It was the lesson of a saint he needed to be taught, or taught more perfectly. It is for this, therefore, that

the Lord seats Himself in the whirlwind. Had Job then, and for the first time, to learn the lesson of a sinner, the Lord would rather have addressed him in "the still small voice," the tone which suits grace, and in which it seeks and delights to be heard. But Job was already a saved sinner. He knew already the grace, but had as yet to be taught the rights, of God. And therefore the voice from the whirlwind. For the saint has to count on such apparent roughness as the sinner never gets. John was left in prison, when every sickness and disease among the people was attended to. The Lord, in His walks of mercy and of usefulness to all who needed Him, may often have passed near the prison doors, but He did not open them, as He could have done, though He was, all the while, giving sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf. Was it that John was loved the less? No. Among them that were born of woman there was none like him. And was it that Job was loved the less, because he was addressed out of the whirlwind? No. There was none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man. But already knowing the grace of God, he was now to learn and own His rights. And he does learn them, and confesses them. And he confesses them, and bows to them, before the pressure of the mighty hand was removed, and while as yet it was heavy upon him. That is much to be observed, much to be prized. For that is a beautiful witness, that Job had learnt the lesson indeed, learnt it spiritually, learnt it in the grace and energy of divine teaching. It is easy and common to own the good of a chastisement when it is over, and then to say, I would not have been without it. That is not above the reach of nature. But while the burden is still borne, to vindicate and bless the hand that lays it on, that is something more. While as yet he lay in the place of ashes and potsherds, and sore boils tormented his body from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, Job said, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further."

Such was the moral, and such the issue, of this simple but important action. A lesson had to be taught a child of God. Human wisdom, and religion too, sets itself to teach it, but betrays its own weakness and dishonour. A minister of the Spirit, in 'the light of the Lord, rebukes the thought of man, exposing the wise and the scribe and the disputer of this world, and applying the principles of the truth of God. And the power of Him who worketh all in all seals the instruction. Human and divine energies are thus displayed in the places and characters which belong to them, the one abased, and the other magnified.

Such are the actors in the scene of this wondrous Book — angels, Satan, the tried saint, and his brethren, the minister of God in the energy of the Spirit, and the Lord Himself. They hold the place, and do the deeds, which, as we have now seen, all Scripture assigns them respectively.

This Book, as I observed before, is an independent Book. The most so, I may add, of any in the inspired volume. In the progress of revelation it intimates nothing before it, nor does any other part of that revelation find it necessary to it. Job's history is not linked with that of the people of God, nor does it advance, in any way, the manifestation of the purposes of God. But stranger and foreigner as it is, it speaks exactly the same language. The same Spirit breathes here the same light shines here. And this is so, not only in the ease of those who are introduced as actors in the scenes, but also in the truths and doctrines assumed or asserted. The corruption of nature as found in the seed of Adam — the value of a sacrifice as a propitiation with God — a coming day of judgment — resurrection and life — these are among the common thoughts here. But more beautiful and striking than all is the knowledge it takes of *the person and duty of the Kinsman*, a mystery well known in Scripture, and, throughout Scripture, largely though silently referred to, when too commonly not perceived — a mystery which shadows all the great truths that are characteristic of the work of our redemption.

This subject is too great to be fully considered here, even had I the grace and light to do so. But it is so happy a one, and suggested by our Patriarch's well-known confession of his faith, that I cannot

altogether pass it by.

Our apostle says, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it." A necessary way of nature is here assumed, and assumed with approval, by the Spirit of God. That regard to one's self which each one of us is ready enough to render, is divinely sanctioned. And then, on this very principle of nature, the apostle goes on to put the Lord's nurture of the Church. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, *even as the Lord the Church*; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Christ is declared to act towards us on this instinctive verdict of nature, that a man is to love his own body. The Holy Ghost, through the apostle, would let our hearts embrace this joy, that the force of this first law of nature is felt by Christ towards us, and the duty it imposes is owned by Him. So that if I can understand my love for myself, I may understand Christ's love to me. The duty I owe myself is acknowledged by my Lord as due by Him to me. He can but nourish and cherish me, as I would nourish and cherish myself.

Can any thought, I ask, respecting the place into which the love of the Son of God has brought Him surpass this? Can the imagination form the idea of a more intense and devoted affection? Impossible. If it could, Christ would embody it, and His Spirit would reveal it, for His love "passeth knowledge." But it cannot.

But though this may be the most marvellous expression of this love, yet there is another of the same character. There is another duty owed on the like claims of nature, which in like manner has been adopted and acknowledged by the Lord — the duty of kindred or natural relations.

The Lord, the Son of God, became our Kinsman. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." And He became this Kinsman that He might do for the children the duties and services of a Kinsman. And what these duties are, and how the Lord has answered and discharged them, we are told in Scripture.

One principal duty was, to ransom a brother or his inheritance, if such or either had been sold.

Now such a sold or forfeited condition is ours by nature, under the ruins of Adam. Forfeiture of every thing is the simple idea that holds our natural condition in the just light. We have forfeited life, and with it all things, by the breach of those terms on which we held life, and with it all things. We have incurred the debt of death. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Adam did eat, and this law demanded death. We sold ourselves under that sentence, and to that penalty, and were debtors to die the death. But our Kinsman has paid the price. Jesus died. He has counted out the money to the uttermost farthing. In the language of the law, eye has gone for eye, life for life, blood for blood. We have not been redeemed by corruptible things as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ. The value of that blood was well tried. The blood of bulls and of goats was not rich enough. It would not do, it could not do. But "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," tells us that He was satisfied who exacted, and could not but exact, the full ransom or redemption-price. And now *we and our inheritance stand repurchased by our Kinsman*.

This is the very principal in the great services of Christ for us. It is largely noticed and foreshadowed by the law (Lev. 25), but it was understood from the beginning. For sacrifice or vicarious offering proceeded on this principle. And that was made known upon the entrance of sin, or act of forfeiture. The coat of skin which covered Adam bore witness that he stood in the value of a ransom, that the virtue of One who had met the demand of God against him was now upon him.

But this is full of blessing — that the great mystery of the Kinsman or Redeemer was known (published by the Lord, and believed by the sinner) ere the law had shadowed it, or prophets

proclaimed it.*

*The same Hebrew word signifies kinsman, redeemer, and avenger.

Another of these duties was this — to rescue or deliver a brother taken captive.

In the previous case of ransom or repurchase, the Kinsman had to deal with a rightful claimant, and to answer his demands. His brother or his brother's inheritance had been sold, and had to be repurchased at a price well and justly ascertained, according to the law of estimations. But this duty of rescuing or delivering a brother is different. Here the Kinsman has to do with a stranger or a foe; and by counterforce, or the strength of a stronger arm, to perform this service.

But this, also, is our natural condition, our state under the ruins of the fall. And this character of Kinsman-service, the Son of God, partaker of our flesh and blood, renders us.

In this, however, His dealing is with our enemy. In the previous case of repurchase He dealt with God, answering His righteous demands for us: here, He answers the enemy for us. For while it is true that we had, through disobedience, incurred the debt of death, the forfeiture of life and all things, so as to need a ransom, it is also true that we had suffered wrong at the hand of the Serpent, out of the results of which, in bondage or captivity to the powers of darkness and corruption, our Redeemer or Kinsman delivers us.

It was in this action that the Lord, in the days of His flesh, went through the cities and villages of Israel. As the stronger man He had then entered the strong man's house, spoiling his goods, and unloosing his prisoners. And He will finish such work, and perfect His way as the Kinsman-deliverer, when He, as the plague of death and hell's destruction, rescues His sleeping saints. Then will take place the *redemption* of the *purchased* possession. See Eph. 1: 14.

And again I may say, Happy is it to know that this way of Christ, this work of our great Kinsman, was also known in patriarchal days. When Abraham heard that *his brother* was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, and brought again his brother Lot and his goods. Genesis 14. Five kings may fight with four in the vale of Siddim, the potsherds of the earth may strive with their fellows; all this, in one sense, is no concern of the heavenly stranger, though his tent may be pitched in the neighbourhood. But the way of Christ, which becomes the principle of conduct to His people, is everything to him — and that way must have been then known, the service of the Kinsman-deliverer must have been then quite understood among the elect household, for as soon as Abraham hears of Lot, he is all action in a moment, and goes forth for the rescue of his captured brother.

A kindred duty with this was, to avenge the blood of a murdered brother, or relative.

This duty was recognized by the law, and kept in memory all through the times of the nation. The ordinance touching the cities of refuge was a relief against the abuse of it; and the famous parable of the woman of Tekoah assumed the fact, that the whole system in Israel took knowledge of it.

But, like the others, it was older than the law and the prophets. Notices of Christ and His ways and His doings for us were the earliest manifestations of the mind of God. Happy for our hearts to know this; And, accordingly, this Kinsman-duty had been prescribed in very early days. When the sword was committed to Noah, it was published. "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." But it was understood as a divine principle even before then. Cain trembled before this law, which, as his words intimate, must have then been known everywhere. Genesis 4: 14. It was, indeed, a part of the very first promise. "It shall bruise thy head" announced it. For that sentence told the Serpent, that man's Kinsman, the

Woman's Seed, would avenge on him the wrongs done by him upon the family. And this duty Christ will perform when He casts the old Serpent, "which is the Devil and Satan," with death and hell, into the lake of fire.*

*The Kinsman *delivering* and the Kinsman *avenging* deals with an enemy or a wrong-doer, and not, as in the case of *repurchasing*, with a righteous claimant. There is, however, this difference: in the case of *delivering*, the Kinsman only rescues his brother or relative out of the hand of the enemy; in the case of *avenging*, he visits the blood of his brother or relative upon the head of the enemy. Christ will deliver us from the hand of death at the *beginning* of the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 15: 54), He will avenge us upon the head of death at the close of the Kingdom. 1 Corinthians 15: 26.

Such are among the duties which a Kinsman, according to the mind and reckoning of the Lord, owed, and such is the glorious performance of them by our great Kinsman. And wondrous is it to be entitled thus to write of Him! wondrous that the necessary and instinctive dictates of nature are suggested by the Holy Ghost as the ground, warrant, and character of the love of Christ to the Saints! that, as I said before, whatever nature tells me I owe myself, that Christ tells me He owes me; and now, I may add, whatever nature tells me my kindred owe me, that also Christ tells me He owes me. And again I ask, Can any thought respecting the place into which the love of the Son of God has brought Him, surpass this? Can the imagination form the idea of a more intense and devoted affection?

The Son of God became our Kinsman for the very end of performing all these Kinsman-services for us. Hebrews 2, I believe, tells us that. And these duties and services embody all the great materials in the mystery of redemption. And, as we have now seen, they have been made known from the beginning. Jesus did not wait till the Law presented Him, in its shadows or swaddling-clothes, to the faith and joy of poor sinners. The Law afterwards gave the things concerning Him a tabernacle, but those things had been made known from the beginning. The fourth day, in the course of creation, brought forth the Sun, which then became the tabernacle of the light, but the light had been abroad through the scene, the light had been shining, from the earliest moment of the first day. Jesus was known in the garden of Eden, and borne on the breath of the very first promise. And cheering this is to our spirits — happy to track these notices of the common faith, these thoughts and truths of God and His covenant, all along the line of the ages, linking the most distant hearts of the elect in the fellowship of one joy, and giving them one song for ever and ever.

Among the saints of the earlier days, our Job knew Him in this great character of Kinsman or Redeemer. As rescuing him from the power of death, or from captivity to the grave and corruption, Job celebrates Him. It is a scripture well known, and much delighted in by the saints. And well may it be so. All that ushers it forth to our hearing, and all that sustains and accompanies it while we listen to it, give it an uncommon character.

"Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

What an apprehension of Christ in both His person and His work is here! It is the faith and hope of our Gospel. Job knew he had a Redeemer, a Redeemer then living, and thereafter to stand upon the earth manifested in flesh, and that this Redeemer would achieve for him a glorious victory over the power of death, and strength of corruption. And all this fine apprehension of Christ is accompanied

with the simplest appropriating faith. "Whom I shall see for myself," says Job, "and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." This is the confidence of Paul. This is the liberty that is befitting the full revelation of the grace of God. Paul and Job, in like spirit, knew the glorious redemption, and knew it for themselves. "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

And what fervency is this with which the Holy Ghost enables the patriarch to set his seal to all this precious confession of his faith! Job would have all men know, and every generation of them, he would publish it far and wide, he would tell it out without a fear that he should ever have to cancel a letter of it, he would engrave it for eternity and have it leaded in the rock, that he knew his Redeemer!

What "light of the Lord" was this in which the Patriarch walked! "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." Job walked there long before the house of Jacob, or the prophets of Israel, knew of it. The light was abroad, and the Spirit led the elect into it, from the beginning. And this occasion, recorded in Job 19, was a moment when that light beamed brightly in Job's soul. His face did not then, like Stephen's, shine as an angel's in the presence of his accusers. He had not, in that way, put on the garments of a child of resurrection, but his spirit within was in the regions and liberty and triumph of such a one.

This visitation, in the energy of the Holy Ghost, drawing forth this blessed utterance from the heart of the patriarch, was the bow in the cloud for a moment. It shared the path of Job's spirit with the grief and heaviness that it knew so well — as Jeremiah's vision by night, and the Mount of Transfiguration, broke the dreary way of the weeping prophet, and of the adorable "Man of sorrows." Jer. 31: 2 6; Matt. 17: 2. It was the Spirit's power. The poor sufferer was made to look away from God's dealings *with* him to His doings for him. For there is a difference. The one calls the soul into exercise, and often are too unwieldy, beyond the management of our hearts. Very generally they need an interpreter. The other takes the soul into entire liberty. They are so plain that a child may read them. They bear their own meaning on their forehead. They need no interpreter. God's providences, or His dealings *with* us, are oftentimes perplexing, as well as tenderly afflicting. God's grace in the Gospel, or His doings for us, are such as cannot either puzzle the thoughts or grieve the heart. They bear their own witness, and tell a tale of devoted, everlasting love, such as it is impossible to mistake.

And these are the things we have to do with, every day. If we be oppressed or fatigued by the current course of circumstances, finding them weighty, dark, and intricate, it is our privilege, and our duty too, to pass over, in spirit and in thought, to that calm and sunny atmosphere in which the Gospel, or God's doings for us, ever invest the soul.

All this may be seen in Job. That loved and honoured saint is generally seen grappling with God's dealings with him. The hand of God had gone out upon all his interests and enjoyments. Loss of fortune, children, and health, had come, by sore surprise, upon him, and he persists, in the heat and resentment of nature, to keep all this before his mind. But in a moment of the Spirit's power he is made to look away from all this, to turn from God's dealings *with* him to God's doings *for* him; and then he triumphs. Then he can contemplate more than the boils on his body, even the worms destroying it; but all is light and triumph. Then, in the face of all enemies, he can sit and sing in spirit, If God be for me, who can be against me? Romans 8.

Truly blessed is this. The tempter would lead us to judge of God by the dark shadings of many a passage of our history here. But the Spirit would have us acquaint ourselves with Him in the beautiful light of the Gospel, the glory that shines in the face of Jesus Christ; and there is light there and no darkness at all — no shadows which have to be chased away, no dimness that needs to be interpreted.

But this rather by the way — I have already traced certain combinations between this earliest and most independent portion of the book of God and all other parts of it, whether near or distant. And very establishing to the heart this is. But such combinations or harmonies may be traced still further — in the *scenes of action*, as well as in the *actors in the scenes*.

There are "heaven" and "earth" here, as in all Scripture; each, too, having its "day" or special occasion.

See Job 1: 4, 6, 13; Job 2: 1. There are also "this present evil world," and "the world to come." At the opening of the action the scene is laid in this present evil world. It is but domestic, but all the features of the great world are seen in it. For each family circle, like every heart, is a little world. Indulgence and the love of enjoyment appear in the children, and something of the common "enmity against God" in the wife of our patriarch. Then, again, there are *natural* calamities, as from wind and fire and disease; and there are *relative* calamities, as from the hand of our neighbour or fellow-men, as Sabeans and Chaldeans. And all this is the various casualty of life and human circumstance to this hour. There is stroke upon stroke, messenger after messenger, turning over every page of the history. It is but human life *then* instead of *now*, but the same life in its losses, crosses, and sore contradictions. There is a little reality, a little of the "friend in need" who "is a friend indeed," but there is a great deal of scorn and desertion in the hour of calamity, still so well known in the world. Job has three friends who sit with him among his ashes and potsherds, but all beside see him afar off. Is not all this "the present evil world" drawn to the life?

But at the close of the action, the scene is laid in "the world to come," God's world and not man's, the world which His energies are to form, and His principles are to fill. It is the time of refreshing and restitution. In Job 42, we are, in spirit, in the Millennium. The Holy Ghost gives us this account of it. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord," are the words which introduce His allusion to "the patience of Job," and to "the end of the Lord." The husbandman toils in hope, and gets his fruit in harvest, or in resurrection. And so did Job endure, till, at last, he that sowed reaped. The 42nd chapter is the harvest of the husbandman. James 5: 7-11.

And happy, I may say, is this further witness to the value which a spirit of confession and repentance has with our God, beloved. As it is written, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;" and again, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins." For I doubt not, that it was to Job's few words of confession and repentance that the Lord referred when He turned to the friends and told them, that they had not spoken of Him the thing that was right, like His servant Job. They had not made confession at the end, as he had done. And let us cherish this assurance. There are comfort and strength in it. The language of repentance prevails. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself," says Jehovah — and then came the divine compassion: "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still." Or, as we may learn from Hosea, words of confession and repentance from Israel, in the latter day, mightily prevail with God. "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely," is the divine answer, with a rich and beautiful chapter of promises.

The consolation of this! the tale it tells us of grace, unwearied, long-suffering grace! And accordingly Job flourishes again. The Lord is as the dew to him. He grows as the lily, his branches spread, his beauty is as the olive tree, his scent as Lebanon. In "the end of the Lord" he is seen as "in the regeneration," or day of the kingdom, and even others dwell under his shadow, reviving as the

corn, and growing as the vine. See Hosea 14.*

*I do not regard Job so much as a *type*, but rather as a *sample*. His calling was the common calling, as a dead and risen man. Every saint, now gathering for heavenly glory, is such. Israel in the latter day will be as such, and the whole system of the millennial age. The Lord Jesus holds all things, and exercises His offices, as the One that was dead and is alive again. But I judge it to be more fitting to speak of Job as a sample of the common calling, than as a type. I could not, however, object to the expression, were it used by others.

Job learnt his lesson through sufferings. The Lord, I may say, did the same. Hebrews 2, 4, 5. He was made perfect for His high functions in that way. Christ's compassions could not have been *priestly*, till He became a man, partaker of the flesh and blood of the children, and suffered as such. And Job's history may be read as the expression or foreshadowing of all this.

So Israel. They will be as a people who, having destroyed themselves, have found their help in God. Hosea presents them in that character. Their language in Hosea 14 is the language of such a people. And Job's history may be regarded as the expression or foreshadowing of this also. He revives, he grows again as the lily, and his branches spread, at the end, as Israel and Israel's branches will, according to their prophet. So that we may speak of Job as a type. But I still feel and judge it to be more fitting, to present him as a sample of us all, in the common faith, as dead and risen with Christ.

Such was our Patriarch in "the end of the Lord." Another witness he is that the burning bush is never consumed, because of the good-will of Him who dwells in it. It may be Israel in Egypt, or in Babylon, the children in the furnace, or the prophet in the den. It may be a poor elect Gadarene, beset with a legion, or the patriarch, the sport of wind and fire and bodily disease, of Chaldeans and Sabeans too, the power and messengers of Satan let out upon him, still the burning bush is unconsumed for the goodwill of Him who dwells in it. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves," says the apostle, as speaking in the name of them all, "that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead."

Such an one was our Patriarch. And such an one he had learnt himself to be. In the school of God he had now learnt his calling, as in the experience of his own soul. But a great lesson it is. A great difference, I am full sure, between having God in the midst of our circumstances, and God as Himself the first and great circumstance. The first was Job's way at the beginning. He would not have been without God. He owned Him, and gave Him an altar in the family scene. But he had not said to Him, Thou shalt choose our inheritance for us. He had not, as Abram did afterward, *come out from circumstances with God*, trusting Him to surround him with His own circumstances. The power to do this cries, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." For such was the utterance of a saint when his soul had come forth from the tempest and temptation of seeing himself second to the wicked in the conditions and circumstances of life here. Ps. 73.

What a voice this truth has for us! Some may listen to it for *comfort*, others of us of feebleness for *warning*. The world and pride and selfishness form the circumstances out of which the call of God summons us; and religion, in a sense, may have brought God into them; but faith, in its simplicity, forms the other, and God has not to be brought into them, for He is there from the beginning, the great Framer or Artificer of them all.

One repeats this truth, for it is, as I judge, the great secret of this Book. Our Job at the end learnt the power of the call of God. And this, I may say, imparts a just and spiritual bearing to all he now does, as well as invests his whole estate with the beauty and stability of millennial days.

He was, at the beginning, as a *prophet, priest, and king*, and so is he again, at the end. But he is so after a new order, exercising his different functions more according to the mind of God. As a *prophet*, he had, at the beginning, too confidently assumed to be the interpreter of God and His ways; but now he says, "I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me." He will be a disciple of the Lord, ere he teach others; he will have his ear opened, ere his tongue be loosed. Isa. 50. 4. Such is the purifying of his prophetic ministry. He will know nothing, save as he learns it from God. His doctrine is not *his* now. As a *priest*, at the beginning, he had stepped in between God and his children, to heal probable or dreaded breaches. But he does not seem to wash his own clothes, while sprinkling the purifying water on others. Num. 19: 21. He wanted to remember that he himself was also in the body, temptable like the weakest. Gal. 6: 1. But now he is *accepted* himself. Job 42: 9; Ezek. 14: 14, 20. As a *king*, his honours now come after his afflictions, his glories after his sufferings; and also after he prayed for his friends, is his captivity turned. He exercises grace, ere he is again entrusted with power — all this being according to the great originals. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto Me."

In these ways, he is prophet, priest, and king, *after a new order*, and all is refined in the furnace, like gold tried in the fire.

And he is the father of a family again, a family also, as I may again say, of a new order — nothing has to be corrected among them, but all is in happy, holy fellowship, the heart of the father turned to the children, and the heart of the children to their father. At the beginning he had to watch their ways, and provide for the evil they might have committed. But at the end there is nothing of this; their father has only to see them with admiration and delight. They awakened *fear* at first, but now *contentment*.

And further, in this beautiful millennial or resurrection scene, which thus closes this story, the stormy wind is hushed, and the lightning of the thunder strikes no more. In this day of a second Noah, such as Job was (the lord of a new world), the waters which once "prevailed" are now "assuaged." And the Chaldeans and Sabeans no longer spoil the spoil, and prey the prey. There is "no adversary nor evil occurrent," no "Canaanite in the house of the Lord" now. Nothing hurts or destroys in all the holy mountain. The Lord delivers His people from those who served themselves of them.

All this is pledged and pictured for us here. And what may be said to be of still deeper value to us, the great enemy himself, the ready and wishful agent of all the mischief and sorrow that had come in, is gone likewise. At the beginning he is in the action, exercising himself as an accuser in heaven, and as a tormentor on earth. And it is for the comfort of the tried saint, that the hand of both God and the enemy are engaged in his trial; the enemy (as here with our patriarch) seeking to cast his crown to the ground and to cast his fair memorial with God in the dust, the Lord purposing (and performing it) to brighten that crown, and still further to bless the heir of those dignities and joys. It is a comfort to the saint, in the day of trial, to remember this. But, at the end, the enemy is gone. The purpose, in the wisdom of God, for which he had been used, is answered, and he is gone. The discipline of Job had ceased as in his destruction.

Satan had understood Job. He knew the workings of that corrupt nature, which his own lie had formed in the garden of Eden. He had said, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him? . . . Touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face. . . . Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." And serious and terrible is the thought, beloved, that he knows us so thoroughly, and understands the springs of thought and will within us. But though he thus understands Job, he did not understand God. The counsels of grace are above him. And by reason

of this, he has been always, in the history of this world, defeating himself, while thinking that he was getting advantage of us; for he has to meet God in the very thing he does, and the purposes he plans, against us. When he interfered with Adam in the garden, he encountered God to his confusion, and the promise to Adam announced his own doom. When he provoked David to number the people, Ornan's threshing-floor was disclosed, and the spot where mercy rejoiced against judgment becomes the place of the temple. When he sifted the Apostles as wheat, he was answered by the prayer of Jesus, and, instead of faith failing, brethren were strengthened. And, above all, when he touched Jesus on the cross, the very death he inflicted was his own perfect and accomplished ruin. So, in every trouble which he brings on any of us, he finds, or is to find, sooner or later, that he has met the mighty God, and not the feeble saint. He entered Job's nest that he might spoil it, and leave it driven and wasted. He came into another garden then. But God was there as well as his servant Job, and in the end Satan is confounded.

Thus is it with the saints and their enemy. They shall take the kingdom, and in the kingdom Satan shall have no place. Out of the trials which he had raised around them and against them, they come forth to wear their crowns, and sing their songs. And, instead of his appearing again "among the sons of God," the mighty angel shall lay hold on him, and cast him into the bottomless pit.*

*It has been observed by another, that Satan is *always* defeated. This thought seems to get the most striking confirmations from Scripture, beyond the cases mentioned above.

He in the instrument, the willing instrument, of destroying the flesh; but that destruction ends in *the saving of the spirit*. 1 Cor. 5: 5. He receives, gladly receives, one that is judicially delivered over to him; but all that ends in *such an one learning not to blaspheme*. 1 Tim. 1: 20. He sends forth his messengers as thorns in the flesh, delighting to do so, as being bent on mischief, having been "a murderer from the beginning;" but this still works good, for *the servant of Christ is thereby kept from undue exaltation*. 2 Cor. 12: 7.

These are illustrious exhibitions of the devil being *always* defeated. Because they show this — that he lends himself directly to his own overthrow. His own weapon is turned against himself. The one whom he assails is, by the very assault, given strength or virtue against him.

Happy assurance! our great adversary is never victorious! It is the pricks he kicks against.

This is full of blessing — and this is millennial blessing, shadowed here in this beautiful story. But there is more. There will be no question in the millennial heavens about the saints, as there was about Adam in the garden, and about Job in the beginning of this Book. The tree of knowledge tested the creature whom God had just made. But in the age of the resurrection, in the heavens where Job and all the children of the resurrection will be, there will be no such test. There will be no question about man. There will be silence in heaven as to man, for the great Kinsman has answered all questions, and man is glorified there.

Such are the changes which have arisen, ere we leave this divine, inspired story. Has not the *trial* of faith been *precious*, as St. Peter speaks, when we can talk of such changes? The enemy is gone. His ministers, or messengers, the wind and the fire, the Chaldeans and Sabeans, take their commission no more. Job, too, has changed his mind, and made his confession to God — his friends have changed their mind, and humbled themselves to him. But there is One who abides the same. He has no step to retrace, no word to recall, no deed of His hand, or counsel of His heart, to alter or repent of. Other scriptures tell of Him, that He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," and that with Him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." And this precious tale about Him and His doings so illustrates and exhibits Him.

There is never entire calmness, or the absence of all haste and distraction, where we are not conscious that our *strength is equal to our business*, whatever it may be. Nor is there, when we are not equally conscious of *integrity or righteousness in that business*. The consciousness of both righteousness and strength is needed in order to fit the hand to do a deed, or the foot to take a step, with entire ease.

Now we know that this ease marks all the ways and operations of God. He is ever at work (to speak after the manner of men) in the full possession of this undistractedness of which we are speaking. We might judge this from the necessary glory of His godhead. But the ways of Jesus on earth always exhibited this, and He, as we know, was God manifest in the flesh. And this ease and calmness, in which all the operations of God proceed, tell us, that though they may to us appear strange and even wilful, as Job thought them, yet is He able to interpret them every one, so as to be justified in His sayings, and clear when He is judged. And this is happy. "The bud may have a bitter taste," and "blind unbelief is sure to err." These things are so. But "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain." We know how our Job was tried — deeply, variously, and, as might be thought, wantonly, needlessly; for he walked in the fear of God, and in the service of his generation. But "the end of the Lord" is more than vindication. It is display. The trial is found to be unto praise and honour and glory. The light of the coming day, rebuke what it may, will have only to set off and reflect the excellency of Him with whom we have to do.

Thus have we lingered, for a little, over these bright notices of millennial days, "the days of heaven upon earth," which shine at the close of this lovely as well as serious and instructive tale of patriarchal times. But there is more.

At the beginning, Job held all his blessings with reserve and suspicion. He was not in safety, nor at rest, nor in quiet; yet trouble came. "The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me," says he, "and that which I was afraid of is come unto me." It must needs be so. The instability with which departure from God has affected every possession and every profit here makes this necessary. But, at the end, there are no "fears within," any more than Chaldeans or "fightings without." No shadow crosses the settled sunshine that rests on all around him, or the calm light which fills all within.

And further — his kinsfolk and acquaintance, at the end, seek him again. They ought, indeed, never to have deserted him. For we deceive ourselves if we think that we must be right if we *grieve* those whom God is *disciplining*. This is often very far indeed from being the case. The Lord said in Zechariah, "I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction." So also is Isaiah 47: 6 — and so Obadiah 10-14, to the same effect. We are more commonly, perhaps, in God's mind, and act as the living vessels of the Spirit, when *soothing* such. And sure I am it was so in Job's case. Had his former friends known God's way, they would have dealt very differently with him. They would not have left him. The very fact that "the hand of God" had touched him, as he so deeply expresses it, would have been the occasion of "pity," as he further says, from his friends.

However, as part of the bright sunshine that gladdens his estate at the end, his kinsfolk and acquaintance again seek him. And they do so to *congratulate* as well as to *compassionate* him. And if they talk to him of past griefs, it is but to heighten his present joy — as Israel afterwards, in their triumphant feast of Tabernacles, might make booths and sit under them, in grateful remembrance of wilderness-days.

All these are happy reverses, and the latter end of our patriarch is twice as good as his beginning. But among all the gladdening anticipations which shine in the latter page. of this history

there is none which more captivates the heart than *the reconciliation*. The patriarch and his brethren, as the narrative largely tells us, and as we well know, had sadly fallen out by the way, as they walked along the high road of "this present evil world;" but as soon as they enter "the age to come," the strife of tongues and stir of war are heard and seen no more.

This is truly welcome to the heart. For what joy will it be to be delivered of selfishness and pride, and many other workings of an ungenerous and perverted nature. How are the pleasures of the heart spoiled by such robbers continually! What a thing a page of history is! What a record of the agitations of envy and ambition and revenge! Is it not misery thus to see men "hateful, and hating one another," and then to remember that we are still alive and active in the midst of the same elements? But another thing is in our prospect; and it is the way of the wisdom and grace of God again and again, in the progress of His Word, as here in the 42nd chapter of Job, to give us a mystic picture of it. Then man, as *deceived by Satan*, shall give place; and man, as *anointed by God*, shall prevail. Then shall be known the joy of getting out of such darkness into such light, of beholding the Sun again, after centuries of midnight gloom.

We know from Scripture that great physical virtue will attend this coming kingdom. As prophets sing, the wilderness "shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" — the lame shall leap as the hart, the tongue of the dumb shall sing, the cow and the bear shall feed together, and the wolf shall lie down with the kid. Nature in all its order shall own the presence of the Lord. The floods shall clap their hands, the trees of the wood shall rejoice, before Him. As creation has already felt the bondage of corruption, it shall then feel the liberty of glory.

It will be as though dormant sensibilities had all been suddenly awakened. It will be as the sweeping of an exquisite instrument with a master hand. It will be the *same* creation, but under new authority, new influences. Let but the sons of God be manifested, and the whole system shall spring into new conditions and consciousness.

And so *man*, when the powers of that coming age take him up as their subject. Let but the passage be made from this present evil world into the world to come, and new principles will at once gild and furnish the scene, and give *moral* enjoyments (which are the richest of all) to all personal and social life.

This will be the touching of an instrument of still finer workmanship. The system around the vegetable and animal world is susceptible of such forms of beauty and of order as may make it all the vivid, happy reflection of divine goodness and wisdom; but in the renewed mind of man there lie latent powers and affections of nothing less than the divinest texture. In its present condition it has to struggle with nature and to suffer sore let and hindrance from the flesh. It is oppressed and encumbered by a gross atmosphere. But it has capabilities of acting, judging, and feeling of the highest order. And let but the due influences reach it in power, those sensibilities and faculties will be all awakened, and forms of moral beauty throughout all personal and social life will show themselves. What a hope for the spirit tried in conflict with the flesh! It will be the same "new creature" that now is: only in other conditions. Not oppressed and clouded, but, as it were, breathing its native air.

Scripture gives us many a witness of such moral virtue and enjoyment in the millennial age. It is one of the most delightful occupations of the mind of Christ in us, to hear these witnesses, in their mystic language, deliver their testimony.

The Father of Israel and the Gentiles are seen together, for a moment, in Genesis 21. And their communion was a sample of the holy, happy intercourse of Israel and the nations, in the coming days of the kingdom. Questions which before had divided and disturbed them are now all settled. The well

of water, which had been the occasion of strife, is now a witness of the oath or covenant. All pure social affections adorn this communion of Abraham and Abimelech; and they part under pledged and plighted friendship. Abraham's grove, in principle, makes the* desert to bloom, and his altar makes the earth a sanctuary; but his way with Abimelech, and Abimelech's with him, give that bright moment its dearest and highest character. For there are no enjoyments like moral enjoyments, no pleasures like those of the heart.

So in Exodus 18. The heavenly and the earthly families are seen together, under the type of Jethro and the ransomed tribes, at the mount of God And all is full of moral beauty. And yet the materials which make up the scene had been, in other and earlier days, very differently minded towards each other. Moses and Zipporah had parted in anger, the last time they had met, and the congregation had been murmuring again and again. But now the mount of God has influences for them, and from the highest to the least, from Jethro down to the most distant parts of the camp, all is in the power of godly order, subjection, and fellowship.

Then again, that generation that lived in the closing days of David and in the early days of Solomon exhibit the same. They had been numbering each other to the sword, in the wood of Ephraim, but the sword is turned into a ploughshare now. The days of Solomon were, typically or in spirit, millennial days, and sweet and surprising virtue attends them. Instead of going forth again to the field of battle, they sit, every man with his neighbour, under the vine and under the fig-tree. "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry."

Are not these *moral* transfigurations? And how blessed they are! Pass but the border. Leave man's day for the Lord's day. Breathe the air of the Mount of God — and all this moral renovation, with its countless springs and streams of social felicity, shall be tasted, ever fresh and ever pure. 'Tis but a little while and all this shall be. The same brethren, who may now be a trial to one another, like our Job and his friends, shall then heighten and enlarge each other's joy. And in the earthly places, "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim." Pride and selfishness shall have ceased to depreciate, as they do now, with all their companion lusts and wickednesses, the pleasures of the heart.

This patriarchal story, on which we have now been meditating, more ancient than, and as illustrious as, any of these inspired records, gives us a like sample of millennial days. Job and his three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, are the same Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, the same *persons*. And they are no longer contending, but united brethren. They have ascended the mount at the end; and there lies all the difference. And barren indeed our hearts must be of every gracious affection, and dead to all godly emotions, if we hail not such a prospect.

He who by His blood did long ago break down all partition walls, and who is now, by His Spirit, giving believers common access to the Father, will by-and-by, with His own hand, join the stick of Ephraim and the stick of Judah, and make them one there. Ezekiel 37: 16. His Israel on the earth shall see "eye to eye," for the light and the joy of Zion's salvation shall be passed, with holy speed, from the messengers on the mountains to the watchmen of the city, and from them to the people, and from the people to the nations (Isaiah 52: 7-9) — and, among the heavenly people, the children of the resurrection, like Job and his friends, "that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come."