

Joseph

Genesis 37 - 50.

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Section 6 of: **The Patriarchs: Being Meditations upon Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job; The Canticles, Heaven and Earth.**

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Joseph becomes principal in the narratives of the book of Genesis as soon as we reach Gen. 37, and so continues, I may say, to the end. So that I now propose to close with this paper on "Joseph," referring to the others, entitled "Enoch," "Noah," "Abraham," Isaac. "Jacob," as if they had been already read.

Joseph's story has its peculiarity in the midst of the things of Genesis — its own mystery, and its characteristic moral; as the others have. *Election*, as we have seen, was illustrated in Abraham; *sonship*, or the adoption of the elect one, in Isaac; *discipline* of the adopted one in Jacob; and now in Joseph, *heirship* is to be.

All this is a divine order.

And, consistently with this, in Joseph we get sufferings before glories, or before the inheritance of the kingdom; all this realizing that word of the apostle, "If children, then heirs . . . if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

For while discipline attaches, to us as children, sufferings go before us as heirs; and this gives us the distinction between Jacob and Joseph. It is discipline we see in Jacob, discipline leading him as a child, under the hand of the Father of his spirit, to a participation of God's holiness. It is sufferings, martyr-sufferings, sufferings for righteousness we see in Joseph, marking his path to glories.

And this is the crowning thing; and thus it comes as the closing thing, in this wondrous Book of Genesis — after this manner perfect in its structure, as it is truthful in its records. One moral after another is studied, one secret after another is revealed, in the artless family scenes which constitute its materials; and in them we learn our calling, the sources and the issues of our history, from our election to our inheritance.

Thus is it for our learning in this Book of Genesis.

But as yet, while we are in this Book, there is no *law*. We are taught that this was so in Romans 5: 13,14. But we might have perceived it for ourselves. Because, in dispensational age, so to speak, the time of this Book was the time of *infancy*. The elect were as children who had never left home, never as yet been under a schoolmaster.

Neither is there any *miracle*. I mean no miracle by the hand of man. For power would no more have suited such hands, than law or a schoolmaster would have suited such an age. And, besides, there was no mission or apostleship to seal. Miracles or "signs following" were not demanded as credentials of a mission. But as soon as we leave this Book, and enter Exodus, we get a mission or an apostleship, and then we get miracles, as seals, to accredit it.

So that what we do not get is just as fitting, from its absence, as what we do get. Neither power

nor law would have been in season, and accordingly neither power nor law do we get.

But I will now pass on to Joseph, or to chapters 37 - 50.

The materials which we find in these chapters, and which form the history of Joseph, may be separated into four parts:

1. His early times at home in his father's house, in the land of Canaan.
2. His life, as a separated man, in Egypt.
3. His recovery of his kindred, his father and his brethren, and the results of such recovery.
4. His latter times in the land of Egypt till the day of his death.

This may be received as the contents of this wondrous story. The way in which it is told has been witnessed to by the sympathies and sensibilities of thousands of hearts in every generation.

PART 1. (Gen. 37, 38) — As soon as we enter on the history, the heir is at once and immediately seen in Joseph. His dreams are dreams of *glory*. But *sufferings* as quickly form his present reality.

The story begins by Joseph being a witness both *to* and *against* his brethren. He tells his father of their evil deeds, and he tells themselves of his dreams. I cannot blame him in either. I say not how far nature may have soiled him in the doing of these things; but the testimonies themselves were, I believe, under divine authority. There was One who was all perfection, as I need not say, in everything He did or said, and He bore witness against the world, and to His own glories. A want of season and of measure may have soiled these services in Joseph; for a thing out of season and beyond its measure, though right in itself, has contracted defilement. A vessel in the master's house, at times, has to *hide*, as well as to *hold*, the treasure that is in it, and should know where, and when, and how, to use it. David had the oil of Samuel, the anointing of the Lord, upon him, and he knew that the kingdom was to be his, but he veiled his glory till Abigail, by faith, owned it. And in this David may have surpassed Joseph. I say not that it was not so. But to tell of what his dreams or his visions in the Spirit had communicated to him, was of God.

And hence his sufferings. The Lord marks him as the heir of glory; he speaks of the goodness he had found, and of the high purpose of God concerning him, and his brethren hate him. They envy him; and who can stand before envy? They had already begrudged him his father's favour, and now they hate him for God's. They hate him for his words and for his dreams; and when in the field together (as of old, it had been with Cain and Abel), they take counsel whether to slay him, to cast him into a pit, or to sell him to strangers.

And this was at a time when he was serving them. He had come a long way to inquire after their welfare, and take their pledge, and to carry them blessings from their father's house with their father's love. Such a moment was their opportunity. It was not as the bearer of good tidings that they received him; but "Behold, this dreamer cometh," they say. "This is the heir" (Matt. 21: 38); that was the spirit of their words. For envy they deliver them; for his love they are his enemies; and at last they sell him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver.

There may be different measures in the common enmity; but in a great moral sense they are all one generation. Reuben was Jacob's firstborn, and we may suppose that he judged himself more answerable to the aged father for the lad, than any of them. He saves Joseph from the sword, and

Judah proposes a sale of him to the merchantmen, in the stead of the pit. After such manners as these there are measures in the common enmity. As some said of Jesus, "He is a good man." others, "Nay, but He deceiveth the people." In the parable of "the marriage of the king's son," some went to the farm, and some to the merchandize, while others were taking the servants and killing them. But the Lord speaks of all as of one generation. "The *remnant* of them," He says, "took his servants and slew them." The Judge of all the earth will surely do right, and sins will get their many stripes and their few stripes, but *the world* has cast out Jesus, and the world is the world; as here, all are the guilty brethren of Joseph; and, as the issue of their counsels and of their common hatred, he is sold to the merchantmen, and by them is carried down to the market of Egypt, for further and profitable sale there.

It is the heartlessness of all this that is specially shocking; and it is that which the prophet Amos, under the Holy Ghost, so solemnly notices in his reference to the affliction of Joseph. Amos 6. And we, though at this distant day, may take our share of the rebuke of the prophet for like heartlessness, if we can willingly love the world which cast out the true Joseph. And what must we say, when we look on the boasted advance of everything in that world, the constant skill that is exercised in sweeping and garnishing that house which is stained with the blood of Jesus? The beds of ivory, the sound of the viols, the wine, and the chief ointments, were never so abundant as in these days. And if we can take up with life in such a world, are we true, as we ought to be, to the cross of Christ? A heartless heart we have, and a heartless world we live in, as it is heartless brethren of Joseph we are here looking at. One knows it for one's self full well; and surely, I may again say, it is this heartlessness that is principally shocking to ourselves (if one may speak for others), as it was to the Spirit in Amos. We are not "grieved for the affliction of Joseph," we are not true to the rejection of Christ. *Worldliness is heartlessness to Him.*

What depths there are in the corruption that is in us! As here, they dipped the favoured coat, the coat that the old father had put on Joseph, they dipped it in blood, and sent it to their father with these words: "This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no." This is the language of Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain was laying the burden of Abel's blood on the Lord, intimating by these words that the Lord should have been Abel's keeper, seeing He had had such respect to him and his offering. So these words of Joseph's brethren seem to lay the burden of Joseph's blood upon the aged father, who, if he loved him as well as this coat seemed to say he did, should have looked after him better than this blood seemed to say he had.

What depths, indeed, in the revolted, corrupted heart of man! What discoveries of these depths temptation makes at times! They sinned, in all this, against their aged father, and against their unoffending brother, at a time when the love of the one had counselled, and the love of the other had undertaken, a mission to them of grace and blessing; as is said of a generation which they represent both morally and typically, "They please not God, and are contrary to all men."

Dark deeds indeed! Joseph's blood is upon themselves, let them seek to hide it as they may; and the day is before them when their sin shall find them out, and this blood upon Joseph's coat shall be a swift witness against them. For the present they do but prosper in wickedness, that they may fill up their measure. The course of Joseph's history is interrupted, that we might get this sight of them during Joseph's separation from them. Gen. 38 affords it to us. And it is indeed apostasy, full departure from "the way of the Lord," in which Abraham had walked, and in which he had commanded his children and his household after him to walk. Judah deals treacherously, marrying the daughter of Shuah. The way of the Lord is utterly despised and forsaken by Judah. Still grace gets pledge here. Pharez is a second supplanter. The hope of Israel is in the womb, a blessing is in the cluster; but truly it is such a

cluster of a wild vine as might well be doomed to the sickle, if sovereign, abounding grace did not say, Destroy it not. Isa. 65: 8; Matt. 1: 3.

And such is the sin of the nation of Israel, as of this, their own father Judah; and such the grace in which the nation shall stand in the latter day. Grace shall then reign in the story of Israel, as it now does in the person of every saint, elected in the sovereign good pleasure of God, and made a monument of the saving power of Christ.

We may not be prepared for this grace of God in some of its surpassing exhibitions. We may be less prepared for it than we think. Jonah was not, Ananias was not, Peter was not. Jonah 4; Acts 9 and 10. We are not always practised, skilful weighmasters in the use of the balances, the weights and measures of the sanctuary. Are the heartlessness of Gen. 37, and the defilement of Gen. 38, and that, too, when found together, too bad? I ask. After all this are we prepared for "repentance and remission of sins" in the grace of God? The moral sense, the natural conscience, self-righteousness, the laws of society, and the judgments of men, supply us with false weights and measures, and we carry them about with us more than we are aware of. But they are an abomination. Deut. 25: 16. In our thoughts, the way of the harlot and the publican are worse than the easy, respectable course of the world. Had we the balances of the sanctuary, we should assay things otherwise. "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

PART 2. (Gen. 39 - 41) — In these chapters, which give us the second part, according to our division, we have the life of Joseph while he was a separated man in the land of Egypt.

During this time we shall see the beginning of his day, or his exaltation. But ere that come, we are to witness his further sufferings — his sufferings at the hand of *strangers*.

We may, somewhat naturally, have the thought that *the Jew* is specially guilty, as far as the moral history of this world goes — specially answerable for sin against the Lord. But in this we are not fully wise. The Jew had, indeed, a special hand in the sorrows of Christ; and, nationally, Israel is under special judgment. But the Gentile is a distinct, not a different man. The ministry of our Lord Jesus tested "the world," as well as "His own." The record touching the cross is this, Of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. Acts 4. All were guilty there. As the apostle of the Gentiles, in his doctrine, says, the whole world has become guilty before God. Jew and Gentile are all alike proved under sin. Rom. 3.

Our present chapters suggest this. Joseph's affliction, begun among his brethren, is now continued among strangers. His brethren had already hated him, and put him in the pit, and thence taken him to sell him as a bond-slave; an evil woman of the Egyptians now falsely accuses him, and he is put in prison, and then another Egyptian, whom he had served and befriended, forgets him and leaves him. But, however it may be with him, whether at home or abroad, God is with him. This becomes the very characteristic of his history. Gen. 39; Acts 7. For, in His way with His elect, God's sympathy comes first, and then His power, the sympathy which accompanies them through their sorrow, and then the power which delivers them out of it. We are prone to desire present ease, and would have all inconvenience and contradiction removed at once. But this is not His way. When at Bethany "Jesus wept;" and afterwards, but not till afterwards, He said, "Lazarus, come forth." Nature would have had the death, which had called forth the tears, anticipated. We judge that we might have been spared many a trial, and we reason it out as a clear, unquestioned conclusion, that God had power. As the friends of the family at Bethany said, Could not this man, that opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? But they reasoned imperfectly, because

they reasoned partially; that is, only on the *power* of Christ.

We ought to (and we should, had we but bowels in Christ) very chiefly value the age or dispensation of His sympathy; it gives *Himself* to us in so peculiar a way. And this sympathy was eminently Joseph's, in this day of his affliction. As we said, that "God was with him" is characteristic of his condition. And he had abundant evidence of this. As soon as he is in Potiphar's house, all under his hand, committed to him by his master, prospers. And change of scene works no change in this; for as soon as he is in prison, the same record we read of him, and the same circumstances we see around him. The keeper of the prison puts the same confidence in him that Potiphar his master had; and under his hand in the prison all things prosper, as they had in the Egyptian's house. So that Joseph had full witness from God, that God was sufficient for him.

It was not for such an one to leave the help of the Lord for the help of the creature. But Joseph craves the remembrance and the sympathy of the butler, and would have him give him a good word with the king his master.

This was natural. Joseph had befriended the butler of the king, and such an one was able to befriend him. His craving of his sympathy is not to be condemned on any natural, human, or even moral grounds. But whether it was quite worthy of *Joseph* to do so may be questioned, whether it was quite the way which *faith* would have suggested.

And it comes to nothing. The butler, as we know, forgets him, and he is left for two long years in the prison. For God will still be everything to him. Help shall come, but it shall come from Himself. With the Lord, the heaviness of the night is sure to yield to the joy of the morning; and ere this season of his separation from his brethren came to an end, Joseph is released, and blessed, and honoured. It becomes the budding-time of his glories.

Excellent things indeed are found in the condition of the separated Joseph, such things as bear our thoughts to Him who is the greater than Joseph. I would just observe four of them.

1. There is great *moral beauty* in him. He was a Nazarite then, as pure an one as Daniel in like circumstances, a captive among the uncircumcised, maintaining his circumcision, his separation to God, unspotted.

2. There is *precious spiritual* gift in him. He was a vessel in God's house, carrying the mind of Christ, and ministering that mind as an oracle of God; like Daniel again, interpreting dreams, and making known even to kings, though still in his day of humiliation, what was coming upon the earth.

3. There is the *right hand of power and dignity for him*. He is seated nearest the throne, and put in possession of those resources on which his own brethren, who had cast him out, and the whole world beside, are destined ere long to depend for preservation in the earth. 4. There is joy, *peculiar joy, prepared for him*. The king makes a marriage for him, and he becomes the head of a family among the Gentiles; and this is a source of such joy to him, that he can, in some sense, as the names of his children tell us, forget his kindred, and even rejoice in his affliction.

Surely these are excellent things found in the condition of Joseph while separated from his brethren. And in them we see the Lord Himself in this present age, the season of His separation from Israel. A child might trace the likeness; but He, who reveals to babes and sucklings, has led the way in this. In Stephen's wondrous word, in Acts 7, we get Joseph and others put in kindred place and circumstances with the Lord, who is there called "the Just One." And this is so full of interest, that though it be but incidental, we must turn aside for a little, and listen to that great voice of the Spirit of God.

Stephen appears but for a moment in the course of the divine history; but it is to fill a very eminent and distinguished place. The occasion on which he is seen, and on which he acts, is full of meaning. Jewish enmity was again doing its dark deeds, and the God of glory was again disclosing His brighter purposes.

Stephen is another witness of the Lord passing from earth to heaven, leaving the earth for a season in its unbelief and apostasy, and calling out a people for heavenly places.

Stephen's was another separating era. Abraham's had been such, and so had Joseph's, and so had that of Moses, and that of "the Just One," Jesus. The occasion of the separation from kindred to strangers, (and that is, from earth to heaven,) may be different, but it is alike separation. Abraham was separated, because God was leaving a defiled world unjudged; and unjudged defilement God cannot make His habitation, nor allow it to be the habitation of His elect. The world after the flood had defiled itself, and the Lord was leaving it in its defilement, not purifying it by a second flood; and therefore He becomes a stranger in it Himself, and calls His elect out of it with Him. Thus Abraham is a separated man. Joseph in his day was another; separated from home and kindred, like Abraham; and so Moses. But Joseph and Moses were not separated like Abraham, simply by the call of God out of unjudged defilement, but by the enmity and persecutions of their brethren. And so Jesus, "His own," and the world made by Him refused Him, and would not know Him. Wicked hands slew Him, and the heavens received Him And so Stephen.

Stephen is, thus, in company with these separated ones, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and "the Just One." And he is naturally directed by the Spirit, to go over their histories in this wondrous chapter. And these separated ones have, at different eras or intervals, in the progress of God's way upon earth, marked out or foreshadowed His higher or richer purposes touching heaven. For their times, as we speak, were *transitional*.

Stephen's was such. Till his day, the scene in "the Acts of the Apostles" is laid in *the earth*. In Acts 1 the risen Lord had spoken to His apostles of "the kingdom of God." In the same chapter the angels had withdrawn the eyes of the men of Galilee, as they call the disciples, from gazing up into heaven, under the promise that Jesus should return to earth. When the Holy Ghost is given, as in Acts 2, under His baptism it is of things in the earth that the apostles speak. They testify that Jesus was to sit at the right hand of God in heaven, till His foes on earth were made His footstool. They then preach, that upon the repentance of Israel Jesus would return to earth with times of refreshing and restitution, and that He was exalted to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel. Israel is, thus, the people, and the earth the scene, contemplated in the action or testimony of the Spirit in the apostles in these earliest chapters.

But Jewish enmity again takes its way, as it had done in many other days, even from the beginning; and divine grace takes its way also, as it had also done in such other days. And Stephen, under the Spirit of God, takes such a moment as his text. He looks back at the way of the nation, uncircumcised, in heart and ear, resisting the Lord in one or another of His witnesses; and he looks back also at the way of the God of glory calling into new and peculiar blessing those whom either earthly pollution or Jewish enmity was separating or casting out.

Thus his own condition at that moment was his text, just as the condition of things in chapter 2 had been Peter's text. Peter preached from the gift of tongues; Stephen, as I may say, from his own face then shining like the face of an angel, and from the enmity of the Jews that was then pressing him and threatening him. The Spirit in Stephen takes up the moment. It was a transitional moment. It was the hour of the shining face and of the murderous stones, of the earth's enmity and of the still brighter,

richer discoveries of grace calling to heaven. And Stephen looks back to other histories, histories of other elect ones, who had already filled up kindred moments in the way of God. For the people of the earth are now withstanding God in him, as they had withstood Him in others. As he tells them, they were always resisting the Holy Ghost; the children and the fathers were alike in this, throughout all generations of the nation.

Thus, in Stephen, we are called to witness another great transitional moment. It is such a moment in the Book of the Acts, as Joseph's was in the Book of Genesis. This links Stephen and Joseph, and gives natural occasion to the Holy Ghost in Stephen to make reference, as He does, to Joseph. But if the earth is refusing Stephen a place, as his brethren had refused Joseph a place in the land of his fathers, heaven shall open to Stephen. Grace in God shall be active as enmity in man is active — and the eater shall yield meat. And heaven does therefore open in Acts 7. A ray from thence finds its way out, and gently yet brightly falls upon the face of Stephen, as the people of the earth were casting him out. And thus sealed from heaven and for heaven, he speaks of heaven, and heaven itself opens to him, and then the Holy Ghost Himself guides his eye right upward to heaven, and then his spirit is received of the Lord Jesus into heaven. All is heaven. Stephen gets the pledge or earnest of it first, then the sight of it in its wide-opened glories, and then his place in it with Jesus.

Nothing can exceed, while still in the body, the brightness of such a moment. It was the Transfiguration of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. It was beyond the measure of the patriarch's Bethel; for here the top of the ladder was disclosed, and Stephen was taught to know his place to be there with the Lord, and not at the foot of it merely with Jacob. The moment was transitional, which the time of Genesis 28 was not. It had its forecasting rather in the rejected, outcast Joseph finding his richer joys and brighter honours among the distant Gentiles in Egypt. Or rather, if we please, Joseph's history and Stephen's history, are, each of them in its day and its different way, the foreshadowing and the pledge of that glory and inheritance in heaven to which the Church, the election of this age, is called.

Simply and necessarily, therefore, are Joseph and Stephen linked together, as we find in Acts 7. Each of them filled the same transitional place — more vividly marked indeed in Stephen, and properly so — but each of them filled it. All was new and heavenly, as we have seen, with Stephen. It is not *downwards* but *upwards* he is commanded to look. The angels had told the men of Galilee in Acts 1 to take their eyes off from heaven; the Spirit Himself bade Stephen, in Acts 7, to direct his eye right up to heaven. The glory of the terrestrial had been one, the glory of the celestial is now another. Even the gift of Tongues had not pledged heaven to the disciples in Acts 2. There was no transfiguration then, no face shining like the face of an angel. The Holy Ghost was upon the assembly in Jerusalem, but the assembly itself was not in sight of heaven as its home and inheritance. But Stephen was on the confines of the two worlds. His body was the victim of the enmity of man's world, his spirit was about to be received amid the glories of Christ's world. He was rejected by his brethren, accepted by God. All was transitional — and fitly does he look back to Joseph and to Moses, who had been in such a place before him.

And here let me say, suggested by this allusion to Joseph and others in Acts 7, that we are not to be surprised by this typical or parabolic character of Old Testament histories. Quite otherwise. We ought to be fully prepared for it; and that, too, on a very simple principle. God, acting in these histories (we speak to His praise) acts in them (surely) *according to Himself and His counsels*. And, consequently, these histories become so many revelations of Himself, and of the purposes He is bringing to pass.

An assurance of the inspiration of the narrative does not, therefore, in the full sense, give us *God* in the narrative. There is purpose as well as veracity in it — there is an "ensample" as well as inspiration. "These things happened to them for ensamples." They happened as they are recorded. There is historic truth in them. But God brought them to pass, in order that they might be "ensamples;" and till we find this ensample, that is, the divine purpose in the history, we have not got God in it. We are to go to these narratives, be they those of Joseph or any other, very much in the mind with which the Prophet had to go to the house of the potter. Jer. 18. He was to see a real work there; vessels made by the hand and skill of the workman. But there was a lesson in the work, as well as a reality. There was a parable in it; for the Prophet had to see God Himself at the wheel, as well as the potter. So in these histories which we get in Scripture. There is reality in them. exact truthfulness, such as inspiration secures. But there is meaning also; and till we discover that, and learn God and His purpose in the history, we have not really as yet gone down to the potter's house.

But this is only by the way, suggested by the use which the Spirit Himself, through Stephen, makes of the Old Testament stories of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, in that marvellous chapter, Acts 7.

PART 3. (Gen. 42 - 57) — We now come to Joseph's recovery of his father and his brethren, and its consequences.

Among the things which gave character to Joseph and his circumstances, while he was separated from his brethren, we observed this, that he was put into possession of those resources on which his brethren themselves and all the world beside were to depend for preservation in the earth. The set time for the world drawing on these resources has now arrived; and with that, the set time for Joseph's restoration to his brethren.

Joseph is now in authority. His day of humiliation and sorrow is over. He is at the right hand of the throne of Egypt, and the great executor of all rule and power in the land. None can lift up hand or foot without him. He has received the king's ring, and he rides in the second chariot. He is the treasurer and dispenser of all the wealth of the nation, the one who opened or shut all its storehouses at his pleasure. He that was in the pit is on the throne.

This is Joseph *as* in resurrection. I say *as* in resurrection. For the thing itself — resurrection from the dead — had to wait for the day of the Son of the living God, who was to be, in His own person, alive from the dead. But though we could not have "the very image" of this great mystery, yet we have "shadows" of it, both in certain ordinances of the law, and in certain histories of the elect. The dead and the living birds of Leviticus 14, and the two goats of Leviticus 16, are among such ordinances; and such historical scenes as the unbinding of Isaac from the altar on Mount Moriah, or Jonah's deliverance from the whale's belly, set forth the same. And so does this season in Joseph's history, being the day of his power and authority in Egypt after his sore troubles in the pit and in the prison. It is Joseph *as* in resurrection.

The Spirit of God, in Gen. 49, using Jacob as His oracle, looks back at Joseph in this condition, and celebrates him accordingly. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." And having spoken this of Joseph, the Spirit uses it as a figure of a Greater than Joseph; for Jacob adds, "From thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." We have Christ in Joseph. The risen Christ is seen as in a figure here. All power is now in Him, in heaven and on earth. He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. His title to the resources of creation is sure, sealed by the dignity of

the place He now fills. And the resources which He now owns, by-and-by He will give for Israel and for the whole earth, after the pattern of this mystery of Joseph. This we are now about to see.

The famine begins, and the opening of Joseph's storehouses begins, at the close of Gen. 41. But the scene is then changed for a season; and the story of the brethren's repentance and acceptance is let in, as a kind of episode. But there is wonderful beauty in this. Because the restitution of all things waits, as we know, for the repentance and fulness of Israel. So that this introduction of the new matter, by way of an episode, in Gen. 42 - 46, is full of beauty and meaning; and the scene in Egypt, and the full opening of Joseph's stores for that land and the whole earth, are resumed in due season afterwards, in Gen. 47. For, "what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" asks the apostle, tracing, under the Spirit, the story of Israel. Rom. 11. "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" So that we are prepared for this repentance of the brethren going before the full blessing of the earth.

Over this operation, this process of the softening of their hearts under the hand of Joseph, it would be impossible not to tarry for a while. I must therefore do so. Our own hearts would need something, if we were not alive to this scene, to admire and enjoy it, and be thankful for it; so full is it of the most exquisite touches of true affection, so profound in the disclosure of the moral principles of our nature, and so important in the sight it gives us of the workmanship of God by His Spirit leading sinners, through conviction and the sense of their ruined state, to repentance and newness of life.

The scene of this marksmanship of God is laid in a season of need and sorrow, as is common in the ways of the God of all grace. For He does not refuse to be sought by us, when we have no help for it. It was thus with the prodigal; it is thus with Joseph's brethren; and it will, I doubt not, be found by-and-by to have been thus with a goodly portion of those who are to praise His name in glory for ever. The prodigal had no help for it. and back to his father and his father's house he must go. Joseph's brethren have no help for it now, and down to Egypt and Egypt's storehouses they must go. Mean it may be, base it may be, in the heart of man thus to turn to God, when all else is gone. But the Lord will be found by this base and selfish heart. He will condescend to enter, as some one speaks, by these despised doors of nature. For twenty long years Joseph's brethren had lived easy and prosperous, with goods laid up, and blessings plentiful around them, and Joseph and his sorrows had all been forgotten. For a time the prodigal had his money, the portion of his father's goods that had fallen to him; and with his money, as long as it lasted, he took his pleasure, his back turned upon his father. But famine touches "the far country" and "the land of Canaan," and then, whether they will or not, the father's house and Joseph's stores must be sought. See Hosea 5: 15.

Thus the scene opens, and Joseph's brethren come down to Egypt to buy food.

As soon as Joseph saw them, he knew them. He "remembered the dreams which he had dreamed of them" But upon this he at once set himself to the task of restoring their souls. See Gen. 42: 9.

Strange, and yet beautiful and excellent! His dreams had merely exalted him above them. Had he sought, therefore, simply to make good those dreams when he thus remembered them, he might at once have revealed himself, and, as the favoured sheaf in the field, or as the sun, the ruling sun, in the heavens, have had them on their faces before him. But to restore their souls, instead of exalting himself, becomes at once his purpose. This was the counsel he took in his heart, as he surveyed the moment when he might have realized his own greatness and their humiliation, according to his dreams. How truly excellent and blessed is this! There was One, in after-days, who, when He took knowledge that He had come from God and went to God, and that the Father had put all things into His hands, rose and girded Himself, and began to wash His disciples' feet. The knowledge of His

dignities only led Him to wait on the need of His saints. Who can speak the character of such a moment? But Joseph here, in the far distance, reminds me of it. "He remembered his dreams," dreams which exalted him, and that only; and yet he turns himself at once to the defiled feet, the guilty hearts, the unclean consciences, of his brethren, that he might heal, and wash, and restore them.

Strange, again I say. There was no connection between such remembrance and such action, save as grace, divine grace, of which Joseph was the witness, is known; save as the Jesus of John 13 is understood.

"Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come." This was taking them up for the good work (though the process be humbling and painful) of restoring their souls. The conscience must be faithfully dealt with, if anything be done. And Joseph aims at it at once. He makes himself strange to them. He speaks to them by an interpreter, and he speaks roughly. He must get their conscience into action, let it cost himself in personal feeling what it may. His love, for the present, must be firm; its hour for melting and tenderness is before it. It shall be *gratified* by-and-by; it must *serve* now. In the day of their sin they had said of him, "Behold, this dreamer cometh;" and now, in the day of their conviction, he says of them, "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land are ye come." They had once sold their brother, when their heart knew no pity; now, with all peremptoriness which knew no reserve, one of themselves is taken and bound. But all this was only, in the purpose of grace, to fix the arrow deep in the conscience, there to spend its venom, and there to lay the sentence of death. And this is done. When God acts, the power of the Spirit waits upon the counsel of love. If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then He showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. Job 36. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother," they all say as with one conscience, "in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

This was something; it was much; but Joseph has still to go on with the *service* of love. Had he consulted his *name* at the first, when he remembered his dreams, he would have revealed himself at once, and stood forth as the honoured one in the midst of his confounded, humbled brethren. Had he now consulted his *heart*, he would have revealed himself, and been the gratified one on the bosom of his convicted, sorrowing brethren. But he consulted neither the one nor the other. *Love was serving*; and the husbandman of the soul has, at times, like the tiller of the ground, need of "long patience," and has to wait for the latter, as for the early rain.

This was a happy and promising, because it was a *real* beginning. But Joseph has yet to learn whether the heart of children and of brothers were in them, or whether they were still, as once they had been, reckless of a brother's cries and of a father's grief. He therefore exercises them still. Roughness and kindness, encouragements and alarms, challenges and feasts, favours and reproaches, all are used and made to work together. Though indeed all is much the same in the reckoning of a guilty conscience. Jesus is John the Baptist raised from the dead in the apprehensions of it. A shaken leaf is an armed host in its presence. Kindness and roughness alike alarm. They are afraid because they are brought into Joseph's house. They fear where no fear is. But all is working repentance not to be repented of; and the fruit meet for this is soon to be brought forth.

Joseph lays a plan for fully testing whether indeed a child's heart and a brother's heart were now in them.

As they are preparing the second time to return to Canaan with food for them and their households, Joseph's cup is put in Benjamin's sack — as we all know, for it is a favourite story — and

they set out on their journey. But this, simple as it seems, is the crisis. Their own lips will now have to pronounce the verdict; for the question is now about to be put, whether they are as once they were, or whether a heart of flesh has been given to them. Will the sorrows of Benjamin move them, as the cries of Joseph once failed to do? Will the grief of the aged father at home plead with their heart, as once it did not? This place, this moment, was the field of Dothan again. They were returning, in spirit, to the place where all their offence was committed. In the field of Dothan, in Gen. 37, they had to say, Would they sacrifice their innocent brother Joseph to their lusts, their envy, and their malice? Here, when Benjamin is claimed as a captive because of the cup found in his sack — claimed as one who has forfeited life and liberty to the lord of Egypt — it is in like manner put to them to say whether they would sacrifice him, and return on their way home, easy and careless and satisfied.

Nothing can excel the skill of the wisdom of Joseph in thus bringing his brethren back, morally and in spirit, to the field in Dothan. The same question is raised here as there, and put to them solemnly. Judah, he whom his brethren shall praise, gives this question its answer. They were innocent, indeed, touching the cup. But this is nothing to their consciences, and nothing on Judah's lips. Conviction loses sight of everything but sin. Its offence is its object. "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." The brethren might have spoken of their innocence, and been somewhat hurt, that, after this manner, they were again and again misunderstood and charged falsely. They had been called spies when they were true men, and now they were handled as common thieves, though they were honest men. They might have said this was too bad. They could bear a good deal, injurious speeches and hard usage, but to be dealt with thus, was something too much for flesh and blood to put up with. But no — nothing of this — this was not Joseph's brethren now. They had once hid their guilt under the lie which they sent to their father, now they are willing to hide their innocence touching the cup under the confession they make to Joseph. Judah stands forth to represent this new mind in them. Guiltless they were indeed in all these matters, from first to last; neither spies nor rogues — but some twenty years ago they had been guilty of what this stranger in Egypt (as they must have supposed) knew nothing, but which God and their consciences knew. They may be innocent now, but they were guilty then; and their sin, and that only, was now before them. Confession, and not vindication, is their language. "What shall we speak.?" says Judah. "How shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of thy servants."

Joseph for a moment feigns as though all this was nothing to him. This may be their business, if they please, but Benjamin was his. Benjamin is the guilty one, as far as the great man in Egypt is concerned; he must remain, and the rest may take themselves home as fast as they please. "The man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father."

What could exceed this? I ask. Did Solomon's wisdom in settling the question between the two harlots exceed it? Did he, in a spirit of judgment befitting one who sat in the place of judgment, find out the heart of a mother? and does not Joseph here, in like wisdom from God, find out the heart of his brethren? It is all beyond admiration. The heart is indeed laid open. After these words from Joseph, Judah draws near, and with the bowels of a son and a brother pleads for Jacob and for Benjamin. "The lad" and "the old man" are the burden of his words, for they were now the fulness of his heart. He will abide a bondman to his lord, only let "the lad" go back to "his father." Let but the father's heart be comforted, and Benjamin's innocence preserve him, and Judah will be thankful, come to himself what may.

This is everything. The sequel is now reached, the sequel which had been weighed from the beginning. The goodness of God had led to repentance. Joseph was exalted indeed; the sheaf had risen

and stood upright; but "this was all the fruit, to take away their sin." So Christ is now exalted, as we read, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Acts 5: 31.

And now the veil may be rent, and it shall be rent. Joseph will be made known to his brethren.

But this was a moment hard to meet and to manage. The reappearing of one whom they had hated and sold, and the remembrance of whom had been so deeply stirring their souls, might be overwhelming. He must temper this light to their vision, lest it prove intolerable. But love is skilful, and has its methods and its instruments ready for occasions. "I am Joseph," he says to his brethren; but in the same breath (as the common word among us is) he adds, "Doth my father yet live? "

Exquisite indeed, in the way of grace, this was, and perfect in the skilfulness of love. Joseph could have answered this question himself. Judah's speech (the echo of which was still in his ears, for it was too precious to allow him to part with it) had already told him, that the father was still alive. But Joseph hastened to bring a third person into the scene. He could not allow the servants or officers of the palace to be present then; for this would be to expose his brethren. And yet to be alone with himself he dreaded as enough to prove too much for them. And therefore he must bring some one in, to share that moment with them; and such an one, the very best of all, was he whom Joseph's word introduces.

Perfect indeed in its place this was. It calls to my mind the scene at the well of Sychar. "I that speak unto thee am He," says the Lord to the woman who had just by His means been discovered to herself in all her old crimson sins. It was not merely, "I am He," but "I that speak unto thee am He." In these words He reveals His glory. He stands before her as Messiah, who could, as she had said, tell all things, and who had now, as she had proved, really told all things, such things as were terrible in the hearing of an awakened conscience. But He reveals it in company with the sweet, condescending, inviting grace of one who was sitting and talking with her. And this was the title of her soul to find freedom, where she might have expected to be overwhelmed. And she did find it.

What skilfulness in the ways of love! From its precious stores, I may say, in well-known words -

"There sparkles forth whate'er is fit
For exigence of every hour."

We only want to trust it more, and assure ourselves of it.

And there is more of this in Joseph still.

Shortly after this he has to say again to them, "I am Joseph," and to add to it, "whom ye sold into Egypt." But then he goes at once through a long tale of God's purposes in all that matter, and lets them know how important to Pharaoh, to Egypt, and to the whole world, as well as to, them and to their households, his ever having left home was about to be. Love does not give them opportunity to occupy the time with thoughts of themselves. Joseph crowds a multitude of other thoughts upon their minds — and he kisses them and weeps with them.

Pharaoh's people may now, after all this, return and share the scene with them. They can now see, in these visitors from Canaan, not Joseph's persecutors, but his brethren. They are introduced to the palace only in that character. As in the parable of the prodigal. The father will see him in his misery; and, while yet in rags and hunger and shame, kiss him and welcome him; but the household shall see him as a son at the table. "Cause every man to go out from me," had been Joseph's word, when he was going to make himself known to them; but now, the house of Pharaoh shall hear that Joseph's brethren have arrived. The spirit of that blessed One whom we learn in the Gospels breathes

in all this. We are in John 4 and in Luke 15 when in Genesis 45.

There are occasions in the story of human life which *the heart* claims entirely for itself. The Lord met such, as we all do at times. There was constant faithfulness in His dealing with the disciples. He did not let their mistakes pass. He was rebuking them very commonly, because He loved them very perfectly, and was training their souls rather than indulging Himself. But there did come a moment when faithfulness must yield up the place, and tenderness fill it. I mean, the hour of *parting*, as we get it in John 14 — It was then too late to be faithful Education of the soul under the rebukes of a pastor was not to go on then. "O ye of little faith," or "How is it that ye do not understand?" was not to be heard then. It was the hour of parting, and the heart had leave to take it entirely into its own hand.

Now a time of *reconciliation* is, in this, like the hour of parting. The heart claims it for itself. Tenderness alone suits it; faithfulness would be an intruder. And thus we find it with Joseph here. He wept aloud, so that the house of Pharaoh heard it. He wept on the neck of all his brethren and kissed them, fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and kissed him. And if he spoke in the midst of his tears, it was only to encourage their hearts, and give them pledges and reasons why they should be in full confidence and ease before him.*

*Neither Pharaoh, nor Pharaoh's house, nor any in Egypt seem ever to have been told of the sin of the brethren.

Surely I may claim these rights and privileges for the hour of *parting*, and for the hour of *reconciliation*. And this was so, as we see, in this time of Joseph's restoration to his brethren. But when all this is over, and he has introduced them to Pharaoh and the palace, and they are in readiness to return to Canaan, in full preparation to bring their aged father into Egypt to Joseph, when they are just standing, Benjamin with them, and Simeon with them, and all was the exultation of a favoured and prosperous hour, one word of warning would not be out of season, and Joseph has it for them, "See that ye fall not out by the way." "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" addressed the heart of Peter much in the same spirit, and at a kindred moment, when the reconciliation, as I may call it, had been accomplished, and Peter's unbroken net had gathered 153, and he had dined with his denied Master on the sea shore.

Surely the whole of this, from first to last, is perfect. There is a moral magnificence in Scripture which makes it, of a truth, the chiefest, as we may say, of the works of God. The Spirit breathes in it all. Its tenderness, its grandeur, and its depth, are alike His. In the issue of the story of Joseph and his brethren we see something that is very excellent. The rights and the wrongs of Joseph, the claims which he had made, and the injuries he had endured, were all wonderfully answered. Whatever dignities his dreams had pledged him, he gained them all in full measure. Whatever wrongs he had suffered, they were all avenged in the very way his own heart would have chosen. The judgment of their sin against him was executed in the bosoms of the brethren themselves; not a hard word touching it passed his lips from first to last.

These were the issues of both the rights and wrongs of Joseph. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

But I must look back at all this for another moment. Conviction of conscience may be but natural, the ordinary necessary working of the soul, the absence of which would be resented as the evidence of a seared or hardened state. But when it is more than the mere stirring of the soul under the authority of nature — when the Spirit of God has produced it — He takes His own object or instrument to work by. David, under the convicting Spirit, says to God, "Against Thee, Thee only,

have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." And thus will it be with Israel in the day of their conviction; for their conscience will then be linked with the once rejected, crucified Jesus. As the Lord says by the prophet, I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications: and *they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced*, and they shall mourn for Me, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. This is conviction, when the Spirit of God takes that business out of the hand of nature into His own hand. This is conscience doing its work, as the apostle speaks, "in the Holy Ghost." In such a day, under such authority and power, Israel will address themselves directly to Jesus. Isaiah 53 shows us the same in another form. And precious work this is in the soul, - *needed* work still in each of us.

Now this is seen in Joseph's brethren. Another has noticed it already in a general way. But it is deeply worthy of notice. It was their sin against Joseph they called to mind in the day of their distress. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother," they say, "in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear." Other sins might have been present to the conscience then. Reuben might have thought of the defilement of his father's bed, Simeon and Levi of their bloodshedding and treachery, and Judah of his marriage. but, stirred into life, not merely by the trouble which had come upon them, but by the Spirit, they are mindful of the *common* sin, and speak, as with one conscience, of their wickedness touching Joseph. And it is this which bespeaks the Spirit's work in this conviction.

Needed work, again I say, this is in every one of us. But the *fountain* has to do its work as well as the Spirit of grace. Joseph, as we saw, interpreted his sorrows, though at their wicked hands, very differently from what their fears and guilt had interpreted them. They said, and very rightly, "we are verily guilty concerning our brother;" he says, and very truly, "God did send me before you, to preserve life." And this is the gospel. We are convicted, but saved. We learn that we have destroyed ourselves, but that in Him is our help. The blood meets the spear. The fountain is opened in those very wounds which our own hands have inflicted. And this will be the experience of the Jewish election (whose history that of these brethren foreshadow, as we know) in the day of Isaiah 53 and Zechariah 13. The cross is the witness. Faith stands before it, and there learns *ruin* and *redemption*.

In the progress of this wondrous story, the reconciliation, as we have now seen, is accomplished. Joseph has received his brethren; and all is therefore ready for Israel's full blessing. Restoration must follow conversion. Times of refreshing and restitution must come upon Israel's repentance. The aged father, with his household and flocks, is brought from Canaan, and with his sons presented to Pharaoh, and they are seated in the very best of the land, the land of Goshen in Rameses.

They were told that they might leave all their own stuff *behind* them, for all the good of the land of Egypt was *before* them. And so it proved to be. Their empty sacks had come down to Egypt at the first to be made full, and they were still to prove that there were a heart and a hand there, both equal and ready to give without measure, and the emptier they came down the fuller they would learn this.

They were but shepherds, it is true, and such were an abomination to the Egyptians. But Joseph "is not ashamed to call them brethren." Strangers they were, and pensioners; but the man of that day, the lord of Egypt, again I say, was "not ashamed to call them brethren." He owns them in the presence of the king, of the palace, and of the nation. And the king proves to be of the same mind. That they were Joseph's brethren was enough for Pharaoh. Truly this has language in our ears. A day is at hand, when all this shall be made good in the great originals of Christ and Israel. He will return to them and say, "It is my people;" and they will say, "The Lord is my God."

But though this is great and excellent, it is not all. The earth itself has to be settled and blest, the

inheritance has to be received and displayed, as the brethren, the Israel of Christ, had to be thus quickened and restored; and this we are now to see. Joseph in chapter 47 becomes the upholder of the world in life and order. By him life is preserved in the earth, and order maintained. And all the people are made willing in that day of his power. All is right that Joseph does, in the eyes of all the people. Their money, their cattle, their lands, and themselves, are made over to Pharaoh; and yet all pleases them, for they owe their lives to Joseph. Egypt, in those days, was a sample of the new world, the world brought back to God by *redemption*. It was a "purchased possession," just what the millennial earth is to be. Eph. 1: 14. It was creation reconciled, delivered from the doom of famine, from death and the curse, by the hand of a saviour. Joseph's corn had bought the land, the cattle, and the people. All was under Pharaoh in a new character, as a purchased possession, standing in the grace of redemption. Pharaoh, who had been kin. of the country, is king of the country still; but he was another, a redeemer of the land and people, associated with him now, as once he had not. As in millennial days. What a picture has the hand of God drawn for us here! what a pledge have we here, yea, what a sample of the earth in the days of the kingdom!

Pharaoh had trusted Joseph, and Joseph had pledged Pharaoh, in earlier days, when as yet nothing was done. Ere the word of Joseph began to be accomplished Pharaoh had seated him in dignity and power, given him a wife from among the daughters of the excellent of the land, and put upon him a name that told already to all who read it, what he thought of him, and how he received him.* And Joseph, in the confidence that all would be according to the interpretations which God had given him to deliver, accepted all this at Pharaoh's hand; and then, but not till then, the plentiful years came, one after another, to make good the pledges of Joseph to Pharaoh, and to vindicate all the honours which had been conferred by Pharaoh on Joseph. See Gen. 41.

*Zaphnath-paaneah, in the old Egyptian tongue, is said to have signified "the saviour of the world;" in the Hebrew, as we understand, it might be rendered "the revealer of secrets."

Precious notices of all that which finds its originals, its counselled and eternal reality, in the secrets which have been between God and His anointed! We have only to bow and worship; and as we gather the spoils and riches of the word of God, to rejoice and be thankful. "I rejoice in thy word as one that findeth great spoil." "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches."

It was fitting that we should have this sample of the new world, or the coming millennial condition of the earth, in the history of Joseph; for, as we said at the beginning he is the *heir*, set to represent such an one in the grace of God, after his fathers had told out, each his several part, in the same fruitful and abounding grace. *Election*, as we have seen, we got in Abraham; *sonship*, to which election predestinates us, in Isaac; *discipline*, to which sonship introduces us, in Jacob; and now, *the heir and the inheritance* which follows, closing the mystery which grace has counselled, and closing likewise the Book of Genesis, in Joseph.

There is no speech or language here, but a voice is heard, clear, full, and harmonious, by the ear that is awakened. And as we look back on Joseph alone, we see a page of sacred story, full of Jesus; a *rejected* Jesus first, a *risen and ascended* Jesus then, and now at the end, a *millennial* Jesus, Jesus in His inheritance and kingdom.

"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." But what we do not get teaches us this as surely as what we do. He has formed the light and the darkness. "The day is thine, the night also is thine." In all this passing and magnificent exhibition of the inheritance, there is one whom we might have expected to see *chiefly*, and yet we see her *not at all*. Asenath the wife is not found here. She and her children get no portions in this great settlement of everything in the land; they

are not so much as seen or mentioned. Is it that they were forgotten? That could not be. But she was the heavenly one, the wife given to Joseph from among the Gentiles in the day of his separation from his kindred, and her portion is more excellent than what the land in its best condition could afford her; it is in him and with him who is the lord and dispenser of it all. Asenath is lost in Joseph; or, to be seen only in Joseph.

And thus the *full* end is told at the beginning; for all this in the Book of Genesis is "the dispensation of the fulness of times," when God shall gather together all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. And surely it is happy, beloved, in the sight of the world's present confusion, in the midst of the agitation of human thoughts which is ever around us, to learn in the mouth of such witnesses, that the end is thus before Him, and has been so from the beginning. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." His people and His purposes are alike before Him; and such truths comforted the apostles, when they found themselves in the midst of church disappointments. See 2 Tim. 2: 19.

PART 4. (Gen. 48 - 50) — This is rather, I might say, an appendix to the history, than the fourth part of it. It is made up of a few detached actions in Joseph's latter days.

The first thing, however, which we get is kindred with what we have seen to be the characteristic of the history itself. Chapter 48, which opens this fourth part, shows us the bestowing of the birthright upon Joseph; and the birthright and the inheritance are, in some sense, one.

In Israel, or under the law, the birthright carried the double portion. The firstborn was to have a double share of the father's goods; and the law enjoined that this should be his by an indefeasible title, a title that was not to be challenged. The double portion was not to be given to any other child of the family on any ground of personal affection or partiality whatever. Deut. 21: 15-17.

But though this were so, the birthright might have been either sold or forfeited by the firstborn himself. His own acts might alienate it, though his father's partialities or prejudices could not. And we find this to have been the case. Esau sold it, and Reuben forfeited it. Genesis 25; 1 Chr. 5. In the case of the sale of it by Esau, Jacob who bought it, of course, had title to it. The bargain and sale made it his. That is clear. But in the case of the forfeiture of it by Reuben, who is to take it? It reverted to the father; but on which of the sons would he confer it? That was a question, and it is that question which this chapter answers. It presents us with the solemnity of the aged father, dying Jacob, investing Joseph with the birthright which Reuben his firstborn had forfeited.

Upon hearing of the illness of his father, Joseph comes to his bedside, bringing his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, with him. None of the other sons of Jacob are present. The Spirit of God, through Jacob, has a special business with Joseph.

Jacob begins the action by reciting to Joseph the divine grant of the land of Canaan. This was a setting forth of the family estate, the property which he had to leave among his children. He then *adopts* the sons of Joseph; for this was needed to the investing of them with the rights of children, inasmuch, as, in a great legal sense, they were strangers to Abraham. Their mother was an Egyptian. They were a seed, therefore, whom the law would, in its day, have put away. Ezra 10: 3. But Jacob adopts them. He takes them into the family. "And now," says he to Joseph, "thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine." They are constituted of the seed of Abraham, and made children of Jacob; and this being done, Jacob at once sets them in the place of the firstborn; for he adds immediately, "As Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine."

This was a solemn act of investiture, by which the rights of the eldest, the double portion which attached to the birthright, passed over to Joseph in the persons of his two sons. See 1 Chr. 5; Ezek. 47: 13.*

*The title now bestowed was afterwards realized, when the family estate, the land of Canaan, came to be divided between the tribes; for Joseph then gets two portions in his two sons, who are treated as though they had been two distinct sons of Jacob.

But we have still to ask, Why was Joseph thus preferred? The forfeited right had reverted to Jacob, and from his hand it had to be disposed of afresh. But why was it given to Joseph? Was this merely grace? I could not say so. Grace, I know, on this great occasion, takes its way. and were we duly emptied, we should delight in the way of grace, even though we ourselves might get, in its distributions, only a left-hand or Manasseh blessing. But while all this is so, I still question whether it were *merely* grace which thus conferred the rights of the eldest son upon Joseph.

I rather judge that Joseph *earned* it. If Jacob aforetime bought it, Joseph, I believe, had now earned it.

We have already, in the history, tracked his path to the inheritance. It was the path, like that of his divine Master, whose shadow in the distance he was, of sorrow and rejection and separation, and yet of righteousness and testimony. And this path had ended with praise and honour and glory in the kingdom or inheritance; and the birthright is kindred with the inheritance.

It is, therefore, easy for us to say, as we have said, that Joseph earned the birthright. Judah earned the royalty, Levi the priesthood, and so Joseph the double portion. And his father gave him a pledge, "an earnest of the inheritance," which was characteristic of this; for at the end of this action Jacob says to him, "Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow." This was an earnest. But not only so; it was a *sample* also. It was characteristic. It spoke of the inheritance as it was to be in the hand of Joseph. This portion had been *won*, and so had Joseph's. The sword of Jacob had gained this parcel of ground, as the patience of Joseph had gained the inheritance and the birthright; and it is according to this that the dying father afterwards celebrates him. "The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him *that was separate from his brethren.*" Or as Moses, the man of God, says of him, "Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren."

The apostle speaks of "the reward of the inheritance," words which may not sound as if they exactly suited each other; for the inheritance is of grace, and reward is of work. So the Lord speaks of giving "a crown of life," words which may also sound in the ear as somewhat discordant; for life is of grace, and a crown is a reward. But the soul accepts these things, and makes no difficulty of them. "All purchased and promised blessings be with you," said the dying martyr to his wife. And he spoke wisely, as he did blessedly; for blessings in one sense are all purchased; in another, promised or given. As a sweet hymn, which we all know, has it

"Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared,
Unworthy though I be,
For me a *blood-bought free reward*,
A golden harp for me."

And Joseph, I judge, got the birthright or the inheritance in this way. It was in his hand "the reward of the inheritance." It was a bought thing, and yet a given thing; an earned thing, and yet a free thing. We see grace in the bestowment of it upon him, but we see also the fruit or issue of that path of martyr-sorrows which he, and he alone, of all Jacob's sons, had trod in patience. and in triumph.

This action, therefore, is in full company with the leading character of Joseph's history. We see the heir in him, and with that the right of the firstborn, the double portion, with its earnest, "the earnest of the inheritance," made over to him, in the action of this chapter.

In the next chapter (Gen. 49) Joseph is only one of the many sons of Jacob — Jacob the father being principal. Joseph and his brethren are together under the eye and before the thoughts of the dying patriarch, who was led of the Spirit to tell them what should befall them in the last days. This I take no further notice of here, but refer to the history of Jacob, where I have already considered it.

In the last chapter (Gen. 50) Joseph is again principal; not, however, so much mystically as personally; that is, not as the *heir*, but as the *man*. We see Joseph himself here, his character and his virtues, rather than the lord of Egypt, his place and his dignities. And considered personally, he is perhaps the most attractive character in the book of Genesis. There is more of the fruit and force of godliness in him than in either of his fathers. We have in him the steadiest, most consistent walk in the ways of God. There is less elevation, I am sensible, than in Abraham, as of course there is less exercise of spirit than in Jacob; but through all circumstances, trials, honours, changes, he is still the man of God who walked in His fear and before Him. His history is not made up of failures and recoveries, or a doing of first works over again. It is a path of light, if not of such light as shines more and more unto the perfect day, yet of light which shines clear and calm and constant. In his history we have not angelic visits, nor apparitions of the Lord, or audiences of divine oracles; but in Joseph himself we have a vessel used of God, because approved of Him; a very precious thing with God. It is not Peniel or Beersheba again, occasional refreshments and illuminations, but rather an abiding witness within, so that he knew the way of God, and kept it. "Until the time that *his word* came, the *word of the Lord* tried him." The authority which Egypt, in due season, owned in him, he had before owned in the Lord. He was the obedient one himself, and then became the one set in authority. He continued as with Christ in His temptations, and then he was appointed to a kingdom. Subjection was his path to honour, the due path of all the heirs of the same kingdom.

But there are some peculiarities in the story of Joseph beyond this. We do not find the altar and the tent with him, as we do with his fathers. Because it is not strangership in the earth that we see in him, but the inheritance or the kingdom, after suffering and humiliation. It is not the tent of his fathers that we see in his history, but the pit and the prison, which were his alone, and not his fathers'. The tent and the altar may duly be the symbols of their calling; the pit and the prison first, and then the throne, become the symbols of his.

And as another peculiarity, we may observe that the Lord is never called the God of Joseph, as He is called "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." But this, likewise, we may account for. Joseph was rather among the sons than the *fathers*. The covenant was not made with him, as it had been with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, nor was any one set aside in order that he might have the blessing. The covenant was made with Abraham separated from country, kindred, and father's house. It was renewed with Isaac. to the setting aside of Ishmael. It was renewed again with Jacob to the setting aside of Esau. But it was not renewed with Joseph; for he was only one of the sons of Jacob, and they were all alike interested in it; they were all the seed contemplated by it; and Joseph was no more of that seed than either of the others. So that we have no ground for the characteristic

title, "the God of Joseph." For, while grace was displayed in the call of Abraham, and then again in the choosing of Isaac. the younger, and in the choosing of Jacob the younger, it was displayed in Joseph only in its common measure in behalf of all the seed, a measure that reached to others as to him.*

*God is afterwards called "the God of Israel," as before He had been called the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Because His covenant was with the nation of Israel.

Thus Joseph takes his place in our sight, and we look at him either *morally* or *mystically*; with his characteristic, virtues, or in his peculiar typical place. But we have not quite done with him yet.

He was, I would now add, *a great weeper*.

Paul says that he was "mindful" of Timothy's tears; and there were many tears in the eyes of Joseph which we might well be mindful of. David and Jonathan were weepers, as well as Paul and Timothy. But were I careful to do so, I might claim it for Joseph, that he exceeded them all. The occasions of his tears were more various. And indeed it is an earnest, real, and hearty flow of affections that we have to covet in the midst of the more cultivated and orderly attainments of this day. Tears are oftentimes precious things, and sometimes sacred too.

At the beginning, when Joseph saw conviction awakening in the conscience of his brethren, he wept. These were tears both of sorrow and of joy. He felt for them passing through the agony; but he must have rejoiced to see the needed arrow reaching its mark, and the bleeding of the wounds that followed.

He wept again when he saw Benjamin. The son of his own mother, her only child besides himself, whose birth too had been her death, and the only one in the midst of his father's children (who were all then before him) who had not been guilty of his blood. Such an one as this was at that moment seen by him in Benjamin. These tears, therefore, nature could account for.

He wept again as he saw the work of repentance going on in his brethren. In his way, he greatly longed after them; till at the last, Judah's words were too much for him; conviction of conscience had then ended in restoration of heart. "The old man" and "the lad" again and again on the lips of Judah had eloquence which prevailed, and Joseph could no longer refrain himself. He sobbed aloud, and the house of Pharaoh heard him. But these were more than the tears of nature. This was the bowels of Christ, or the tears of the Father upon the neck of the prodigal.

Each of these weepings was beautiful in its season; but we have more still.

He fell on his father's face, and wept, as his father had just yielded up the ghost. This was as the grave of Lazarus to Joseph; and there he and his Lord can weep together.

And again he wept, when, after his father's death, his brethren began to suspect his love. He was disappointed. An unworthy return to the ways of a constant, patient, serving love, made him weep — in the spirit of Him, I may say, who wept over Jerusalem. For years had he been doing all he could to win their confidence. He had nourished them and their little ones. Years had now passed, and not one rebuke of them do we find either in his life or in his ways. Grief over their departed father had just freshly given them to know what common affections they had to bind them together. He had supplied them with every reason to trust him. And yet, after all, they were fearing him. This was a terrible shock to such a heart as Joseph's. But he did not resent it, save with his tears, and renewed assurances of his diligent, faithful love. And have not such tears as these, I ask, as fine a character as tears can have? They were as the pulses of the aggrieved spirit of the Lord. "How long shall I be with you?" "Why are ye fearful?" "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" These

were kindred pulses of an aggrieved heart in Jesus. Jesus has *sanctified* tears, and made them, like everything else that went up from Him to God, a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour; Joseph and David and Paul, yea, Jonathan and Timothy too, have made them precious, and put them among the treasures of the Spirit in the bosom of the Church.

Such an one was Joseph, and in such company we put him; again, I say, perhaps the most attractive character in the Book of Genesis. We see in him the grace and blamelessness that we get in Isaac. the Cc piety," as we speak, marking him in all his relations in life. But withal, there was combination which we do not find in Isaac. There was firmness — energy as well as sensibility.

It remains for him to do the last office of this piety to the memory of his father; and he does it, we need scarcely say, in all grace and faithfulness. He buries his father, as his father had willed it, in the land of Canaan. But the whole is conducted with much solemnity — and the occasion is such, that we must wait upon it for a little moment.

In other days, worship was a magnificent ceremonial. Temples, altars, feasts, holy days, sacrifices, and the like, furnished it, and officers of different orders, in appropriate vestments, conducted it. Because in those days worship pointed onward to certain great mysteries which had then to be realized. But now these mysteries have been accomplished in the manifestation of Christ, His person, work, sufferings, and victories — so that gorgeous worship is now but a reproach on all that which is found in Him, in its full substance and efficacy.

So as to funerals, as well as worship. In other days they were to be gorgeous. Because resurrection was then only in prospect; and funerals then were a kind of pledge of the expected resurrection; and it was fitting that the pledge should be magnificent according to the glory of that which it pledged. But now, since resurrection has been realized in the person of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the gorgeous funeral, like the ceremonious worship, is rather a reproach, as though the great mystery itself had not been yet realized in its substance and efficacy. For it is not funereal pomp which is now the pledge of our coming resurrection — the resurrection of the Lord is that, the first-fruits of a promised harvest.

Accordingly, worship and funerals are now, in like simplicity, to bespeak the Church's faith in *accomplished* mysteries. We are now in sight of the victory of the Lord Jesus. We no longer give or receive pledges of it, as in ordinances, but we celebrate it. Joseph of Arimathea gave His body a costly burial, as Joseph the son of Jacob here gives the body of his loved and honoured father. We read of Jesus: "He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death." In that day of Joseph of Arimathea the grave had not been spoiled; and pledges therefore — like pledges with these in the day of the Patriarch — might still be given. But in the burial of the Lord Jesus we properly see the last of these pledges; because in Him we see the first-fruits of them that slept. The grave-clothes and the napkins he in the empty sepulchre as spoils of a glorious war, and trophies which tell of glorious victory. Death was overthrown, and faith now celebrates what offices and usages, as well as ordinances and ceremonies, had once only pledged and foreshadowed. And let me add, that faith did learn this lesson, for the burial which followed that of Jesus had neither its embalming nor its magnificence It was shortly disposed of, reverently withal, and lovingly. "Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

Had we faith, deeply should we prize all this. Our privileges are great indeed. In the services of the house of God now, the table has succeeded the altar, and instead of a sacrifice we have a feast upon a sacrifice. And so have we to see death and burial, too, in the light of the resurrection of Jesus.

These things we notice in connection with Jacob's funeral. His death has its moral operation in

the family, bringing out (as is often the case when the head of a family is removed) what before was not suspected to be there. But I must meditate on this for a while.

The simplicity of patriarchal *faith* is very remarkable. It was like their manners — beautiful from their artlessness. There was nothing of the spirit of bondage in the Genesis-saints. The patriarchs walked in the assurance of this, that God was their God, His promises their portion, and the city and land of the glory their inheritance. They lived and died in this spirit of faith. No suspicions or reserves, no questionings, no mistrust of grace, defiles their souls. And this is surely the more strange because, while we nowhere among them trace this spirit of bondage, we see it everywhere else, immediately after we leave the Book of Genesis, and then all through Scripture. It would be vain to follow all the notices of it which Scripture furnishes. It works naturally and abundantly in us. Surely we know it in ourselves, and see it in all around us.

How is it, then, that it does not betray itself in the Patriarchs? Was it because they were such constant witnesses to themselves of the grace and election of God, and had never heard the voice of the law? This helped to form their minds, we may be sure. But besides this, this absence of the spirit of bondage was beautifully consistent with their dispensational standing; for they were as children who had never as yet been from home. They were in infancy, and they could no more move in the presence of God in a spirit of fear and uncertainty, than a child, ere he left home, could be tempted to question his title to the nurture and shelter of his father's house. And it is of the moral beauty and perfection of this infant Book of Genesis that we see this child-like, unquestioning faith in the saints of God there. They are faulty, and that, too, at times, through want of faith, when certain circumstances press them; but their souls are never defiled by a spirit of mistrust and bondage. We see this throughout — at least till we reach the moment when we are taking leave of the Book, and have gone beyond what is properly the patriarchal character of it. I mean, in Joseph's brethren, as soon as Jacob's funeral is over.

It then appeared that they had not been trusting their brother with a guileless, happy confidence. There had been an object of common interest between them, and that had been too much the secret of their confidence, instead of Joseph himself. They had not boldness by reason of what Joseph was, and of what he had done, but they had trusted in a circumstance. Jacob's presence was the stay of their hearts. They had repented; they had been convicted and quickened; but still, their confidence did not honour Joseph, as Joseph had richly deserved at their hands.

And this may have a word for us. We may ask ourselves, if countenance and fellowship of others were withdrawn, would it be found that our whole confidence has all along been in Jesus? that we have so learnt grace, that we can abide the presence of unveiled glory? that the removal of a Jacob clouds not the atmosphere in which our souls have been dwelling?

But we are now reaching the very end of the times of Joseph. However, ere we witness his death, we have (seasonable for us to notice this in this eventful day of ours) a fine instance of *faith's acquaintance with the course of the world's history*.

I do not speak of a *prophet's* knowledge of what is about to be among the nations, such as Daniel had, when he told of the rise of one beast after another, and of the Great Image from its head of gold down to its toes of iron and clay. Such knowledge was by the *Spirit*, the Lord filling the heart of Daniel, and of others like him, with His own light. I speak only of *faith's* knowledge of that course of things which the history of the nations is to take.

Joseph says to his brethren, "I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

The children of Israel were at that time very happy in the land of Egypt. They were in the full favour of the king; they were in possession of the richest district in the country, and they saw one of themselves the second person in the kingdom. Not a single symptom of danger or of change appeared in all their condition. And Joseph himself was as happy as circumstances could make him. "He saw Ephraim's children of the third generation; the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees,"

But in the midst of all this, Joseph speaks of God *visiting them*; words which bespeak days of sorrow to be at hand, such days as that God would then be their only friend and helper.

Strange this was, very strange! Who could believe it? Was Joseph dreaming? statesmen and politicians might have said. But no; Joseph was not dreaming. God's word was his wisdom. The divine oracle in Gen. 15 had forewarned, that Egypt would afflict Israel, but that God would befriend them, and bring them back to Canaan — and this word from God was everything to Joseph, was everything to faith — appearances were nothing. The oracle had spoken it. Joseph believed it and remembered it. And thus by faith Joseph saw Israel's *affliction* in the day of Israel's brightest promise and prosperity — he saw Egypt's *enmity* in this day of Egypt's friendship — he saw *brick-kilns and task-masters* in the fair fields and sunny harvest of Goshen. As Noah, by Eke faith, had once seen a deluged world during 120 years of successive sowing times and reaping times, vintages and summer gatherings, times of buying and selling, planting and building.

This was faith's acquaintance with the coming course of things. And faith, in this our day, is to be a like politician, and to know something of the course of things by the light of God's word, in the face of all appearances. And this is the only act in Joseph's life which is recorded as of faith in Heb. 11. It is thus strikingly distinguished in the midst of so many acts of faith and godliness, and of such a course of walking with God, as we have seen in him. But it was worthy to be thus signaled. It was a great witness of Joseph's living upon the word of God, in the midst of the world's attractions and occupations, and with a mind superior to all present appearances. Abraham had been instructed, through divine visions and audiences, about this coming history of Israel in Egypt; Joseph only used what Abraham had received. We have no visits of the Lord to Joseph, as we have to Abraham. Joseph, if you please, was not in Abraham's elevation. But we have in him what is morally the chiefest, the light and certainty of a believing mind, the apprehensions and decisions of faith. He remembered what Abraham had heard and he acted on what he remembered. What he wanted in personal elevation, as an oracle of God, he had, in moral power, as a believer in God. And if I must needs choose between them, I would rather *believe* than be *inspired*. And Joseph believed, when, as we read, "he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones." Heb. 11: 22. This was *faith's political knowledge*, as I may speak — faith's acquaintance with the things which were coming on the earth. And this is that which made a Noah or a Joseph wiser than all the senators of the kingdoms. We know well how Joseph's words were vindicated, and how very unlooked for brick-kilns defiled the goodly lands of Goshen, and taskmasters drove Israel to their work. Just as before, in Noah's day, waters covered the very tops of the mountains, and a ship, apparently in all folly built for dry land, was soon the only ark of safety in a watery world.

And I do ask, Is it not to be thus with faith still? Have we not warrant, by faith in the word of God, to know the course which this world, with all its growing refinement and varied progress, is taking every hour? Have we not reason to know that it is on its way to judgment? Indeed we have. The Lord Jesus has been rejected in this world. That is the fact which gives the world its character with God. No advance in civil order and cultivation, no spread of even His own truth among the nations, can avail to relieve the world of the judgment that awaits it because of this deed. Let the day be as

bright as was the day of the Egyptian Joseph to Israel, faith knows that "the polished surface" is soon to be broken up. Circumstances never give faith its object. It is the word of God that does that; and circumstances and appearances are not to be allowed to take the eye of faith off its object. The house, swept and garnished as it is at present, promises much. So did the land of Rameses and the friendship of Pharaoh, in the days of Gen. 50. But such promises are idle words in the ear of faith; it regards them not. As Jeremiah said to the king of Judah, when the allied army had arrived, and the hostile army had broken up and gone away, "Deceive not yourselves;" so faith says, in this hour, to the generation that is boasting in progress, "Deceive not yourselves." Faith says this with boldness; for well it knows, that the last state of the swept and garnished house is worse than the first.

Joseph then gave proof that he believed what he testified. Like Jacob, his heart was in Canaan, the land of the covenant, the land of his father's sepulchres. And, like Jacob, he took an oath of his brethren, saying, "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." The unseen world was the real thing with him, as it had been with his fathers. The call of God had linked them all with that which lay beyond death, and their thoughts and their hearts were there before themselves. It was as natural for them to die as to live.

"Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old."

His brethren, the children of Israel, were true to him, as he had been to his father Jacob. They embalmed his body at once. Afterwards, Moses carried it with him out of Egypt; and, at the last, Joshua buried it in Shechem in the land of Canaan. See Gen. 50. 26; Ex. 13: 19; Joshua 24: 32.

We thus close the story of Joseph, and with it the Book of Genesis, the book of the creation and of the first ways of God, the book also of the patriarchs, the earliest families of the children of men, and the infant age of the elect of God.

We are sensible, I think, when we leave this book, that in some sense we are getting on lower ground. I think this will be generally felt.

In Genesis, the Lord is rather *manifesting Himself*; afterwards He is *exposing man*. Man was not under law, as we have said, during the times of this book. He was set to learn God under many and different expressions and revelations of Himself. But as soon as law enters, and that is very quickly after we leave this book, man is necessarily brought forward, and we have to see him, not simply as under the call of God, but in his own place and character. And surely this is enough to make us sensible of being, in some sense, on lower ground. Of course, in the unfolding of counsels, in the bringing forth of God's resources upon man's failures, and in the further manifestations of God Himself upon the exposure of man, we are advancing all through the volume from beginning to end.

But, all-various and wondrous as these counsels are, which get their disclosure as we proceed through Scripture, let the wisdom of God be never so manifold, as we know it is, yet we may say, every part of it gets some notice or foreshadowing in this Book of Genesis. These are faint and obscure; but the rudiments of the whole language are found in this introductory and infant lesson. Atonement, faith, judgment, glory, government, calling, the kingdom, the Church, Israel, the nations, covenants, promises, prophecies, with the blessed God Himself in His holiness, love, and truth, the doings of His hand, and the workmanship and fruits of His Spirit, all these and the like appear in this book. Creation was displayed at the beginning Soiled and ruined under the hand of man, redemption was published. The heavens and the earth are then shown to be the scenes of redemption (as they had been at the first of creation) in the histories of *Enoch* and *Noah*. And then in *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, and *Joseph* we get man (the leading subject of redemption, as of course he is) in his election, adoption, discipline, and inheritance. These mysteries have been looked at in this series, and they lie under the

eye, and for the observation of our souls, as we pass on from one of these histories to another.

And let us learn to say, beloved, to His praise who has spread out such living creations before us, that if the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork, so with no less clearness and certainty do the pages of Scripture bespeak the breathings of His Spirit.