

## THE HARVEST CART :

OR, THE ORACLE OF AMOS AGAINST ISRAEL.

AMOS II. 6-16.

AMOS, as he himself tells us (Chap. vii. 14), was a poor and unlearned shepherd, who had much ado to earn his daily bread. And, happily, when God speaks through a shepherd, He speaks *like* a shepherd, just as when He speaks by a sage, He speaks like a sage : for thus the revelation of his high Will is brought home to all sorts and conditions of men, from the most rustic to the most refined.

All the prophets publish the same law, proclaim the same gospel ; but each is left to clothe it in the words and images natural and familiar to his own mind ; in order that both law and gospel may be made known, by many minds, to many men.

The law common to all the prophets was, that men were bound to do that which was good and right in the sight of God, and would discover that they were bound to do it, not only by the response of conscience to his commandments, but also by the rewards which waited on obedience and the punishments by which disobedience was avenged. The gospel common to them all was, that God was the Father of men, felt toward them as the fathers of their flesh felt for *their* children—rejoicing in their well doing, saddened by their faults and sins ; seeking in and through all their changes of mood and posture, and the corresponding changes which these induced in Him, to redeem them from their sins and raise them to their proper blessedness ; not alienated from them even by their worst offences, not

hating even when He corrected them, but aiming and desiring by his very punishments to draw them to the love and obedience of his good will.

Amos, the shepherd, held this gospel as firmly, and loved the God who gave it as sincerely, as any of the goodly fellowship; but he could only preach it in his own rustic way. And as the Israelites were mainly small farmers and husbandmen, peasant proprietors, who sat under *their own* vines and their own fig trees, it was well that he should preach it thus, since they were the more likely to take his meaning and to remember his words. A man of more culture and refinement might have scrupled to compare the Almighty Ruler of the Universe to a harvest cart, groaning under its burden of sheaves (Verse 13, which I take to be the dominant verse of this remarkable passage); and if God had deigned to speak to them by none but sages, or statesmen, or scribes, they would probably have lost this expressive image; and we should have shared their loss. But Amos did not scruple to use this homely telling figure. And hence the Jews, so often as they saw and heard the rude Eastern cart, with its wooden axles and solid wheels of wood, swaying and groaning and shrieking under its weight of sheaves, as it was driven across the uneven stubbles, were reminded in a very natural yet striking way, of the Divine sorrow, the Divine oppression, under the burden of their transgressions.

Critics may complain of the figure as rude and unworthy of its theme, and of the conceptions of the Deity which it implies as barbarous and anthropomorphic; and even learned and devout scholars may do a little violence to the laws of Hebrew grammar and construction rather than admit that so human a conception of God is here presented to us.<sup>1</sup> But to as many of us as believe that we touch our

<sup>1</sup> The marginal reading supplies an illustration, and suggests that what the Prophet meant was that Jehovah would crush Israel for their sins, as the

highest conception of God when we think of Him as our Father in heaven—as rejoicing, therefore when we rejoice, afflicted in all our afflictions, and as only chastening us “as a man chasteneth his son”<sup>1</sup>—it is a very true and impressive figure, and conveys a very true and pathetic conception. For which of us that is a father has not gone with a dull and heavy pain at his heart when he has discovered—if indeed so dreadful a discovery has amazed us—that a child of ours has proved untrue to all his training, and fallen into the very vices which we most hate? Which of us, exempt from so heavy a trial as yet, does not feel that should it fall on us, were one of our boys or girls to “go to the bad” and drag our untarnished name through the mire,<sup>2</sup> all our life would be darkened, and a burden be laid upon us such as we could very hardly bear? Our love might turn to pity; but our very pity would be embittered by shame. We might still do all we could to recover the outcast; but all our pride in him, or her, would be gone, and our hearts would be the sadder and the less hopeful as long as we lived.

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth” us. Must He not, then, if there be any truth in this figure of the Divine fatherhood, be burdened by our sins, the sins by which we “profane his holy name?” Do we not too often, and too carelessly, cast even this burden upon Him, and expect Him to bear it for us—*his* care being the heavier the less *we* care for our transgressions? Ought we not to find a very moving pathos in this appeal to his sinful and disobedient children: “*Lo, I am pressed under you like as a cart is pressed that is full*” (“as full as it will

heavily-laden harvest cart presses the ground,—a reading which both violates the Hebrew idiom and strains the whole tone of the passage. See the admirable, though brief, discussion of this verse, by R. Gandell, M.A., Laudian Professor of Arabic, in *The Speaker's Commentary*, Vol. vi. pp. 530, 531.

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy, viii. 5,—a lovely verse.

<sup>2</sup> Mark the phrase “to profane my holy name” in Verse 7.

hold," the idiom implies) of *sheaves*"? Which of us, did we hear Him thus bemoaning Himself under the burden of our sins, would not pause, and think, and perhaps amend? And why should we not hear Him groaning thus? For what after all is this expressive figure but a picturesque rendering of the complaint, the charge, "Ye have *wearied* me with your iniquities," which the prophets repeat again and again? <sup>1</sup>

More sins are wrought from want of thought than from want of heart. It is mainly because we are so thoughtless that we violate the pure and kindly will of our Father in heaven, just as it is mainly through *their* thoughtlessness, because they do not know how much they hurt us, that our children break the laws and rules intended for their good. And, therefore, it is well that the Bible should contain these pathetic appeals to our love and reverence; and that we should be reminded how much we pain the Father of our spirits whenever we wrong our own souls.

But when we are brought to a stand by such words as these, and compelled to reflect on what they mean, we may still only too easily miss, or evade, their force. Sin is wrong, we admit; it is the transgression of a law which we ought to obey, if for no higher reason, yet for this, that only by obedience to it can we rise to our proper perfection and blessedness. And the fear of offending and grieving our Father in heaven, by failing in our duty to Him, to ourselves, and our neighbour, is, or should be, as we also confess, a very potent motive to obedience.

All this we may sincerely admit and feel; while, nevertheless, for want of due reflection on what sin is, we may still offend Him, still injure and degrade ourselves, without being fully conscious of what we do. For we are very prone to conceive of sin as something mystical, something

<sup>1</sup> See Isaiah i. 14; vii. 13; xliii. 24; Malachi ii. 17. Comp. Jeremiah xxxi. 18-21.

purely religious and spiritual ; as having little to do with our daily tasks and duties, but occupied mainly with the mysterious recesses and movements of our interior life. Of course I do not mean that we are any of us so ignorant and ill-instructed as to formally deny the ethical character of sin ; but I do mean that, practically, the word Sin calls up in many of our minds ideas of a very hazy and indefinite kind ; that, when we hear it, we think rather of failures in worship and in our inner religious life than of our failures in the plain moral duties of the home and the marketplace. And hence many a man who daily confesses himself to be a " miserable offender " would be shocked and indignant were we to infer from this confession that, in the plain and beaten way of daily business and daily duty, he was every day breaking moral laws which he is bound to obey.

It will be wholesome, therefore, for us to consider what were the sins by which God complains that the men of Israel were afflicting and burdening his heart, so that He was pressed under them like as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.

And there is no difficulty in recovering them. The Prophet tells us in so many words that there were three, nay, four, transgressions by which they grieved God ; and in no one of them is there any touch of mysticism or inwardness ; they are all obvious and common sins against the moral code.

Their first transgression was an unjust administration, or an unjust use, of the law. They " sold the righteous for money, and the poor for a pair of sandals " (Verse 6) ; that is to say, they either bribed the judges to condemn innocent men as guilty of the crimes of which they accused them, and to sell a poor man who was in their debt in order to gratify themselves with a new pair of sandals ; or they availed themselves of the debased law and custom of the time to sell into slavery men whom, as their brethren, they

were forbidden to enslave by the law of God, men who were poor or insolvent by no fault of their own, in order to secure the comforts or luxuries which they desired. And if any of us should take advantage of English laws and customs—laws of the realm or customs of the market—or of our own superior wealth, or of his necessities, to do a neighbour wrong, to bring him into bondage to Want, Penury, Fear, we should become guilty of the very sin condemned in them.

Their second transgression was their open and high-handed oppression of the pious and meek. “They bent the way of the meek, and panted after dust of the earth on the head of the poor” (Verse 7): that is to say, they laid traps for those who were of a quiet and modest spirit, nay, wove traps for the meek out of their very meekness, and could not rest till they had reduced the poor—poor in spirit as well as in means—to a misery so abject as that they scattered dust on their heads—the common sign of Eastern mourning and lamentation. And we should become partakers in this sin were we to make our market of the innocent and gentle, to turn their very innocence and gentleness against them; were we to resent the carriage of men who are more faithful to their convictions, to their law and religion, than we are to our own, or to wrong any good man because we know he will not requite evil with evil.

Their third offence—“O, it was rank, and smelt to Heaven!”—was the shameless immorality of which the Prophet gives a shocking instance in Verse 7, and of which we might find only too many instances equally shocking in our own streets and slums; of which indeed we lately had a shocking public and well-known illustration, as if to warn us that no eminence of position, no gravity of office, no reputation for virtue and religion, is a sufficient defence against the vulgarest solicitations of the flesh, that on this

side of our nature we all stand perilously open to temptation.

Their fourth transgression was that they made Religion itself a cloak for their disobedience and rapacity. According to the Hebrew law, if a poor man were compelled to pledge his cloak or upper garment, it was to be returned to him before night came on (Exod. xxii. 25), and no such pledge was to be slept upon (Deut. xxiv. 12, 13). Yet they not only refused to return these pledged garments, not only slept on them, but used them as carpets on which they stretched themselves at their sacrificial feasts, and while they drank wine in the house of their God which they had purchased with the fines wrung from the necessities of the poor and miserable. In order to secure them, they carried their pledges into the very temples, and sought to hallow their usurious exactions by expending them in meat-offerings and drink-offerings which they shared with the ministers of the temple. And which of us has not heard of men who, while making a great show of godliness, have traded on their reputation of religion, hiding their frauds under that sacred cloak; and of men who have thought to condone their greed and avarice by making large gifts or leaving large bequests to charitable or religious institutions? Which of us is not aware that the very name of Religion has thus been brought into suspicion and contempt, insomuch that if a bank is opened with prayer, or its manager is known to be a Sunday-school superintendent, all wary and experienced men of business instantly fight shy both of it and of him?

*These* were the sins under which the God of Israel groaned. And what we have to mark is that they were all quite common and vulgar sins, all open and notorious sins, the character of which no man could mistake who reflected on his ways. There was nothing inward, recondite, mystic about them. No thoughtful man will deny that the spiritual Faith under which we have been brought up has thrown

open a whole world of questions, doubts, apprehensions, at once more delicate and more difficult than any known to the Jewish age, or that these questions are of the gravest moment; such questions for example, as those which are suggested by the conflict in our minds between faith and scepticism, or such as relate to the sincerity, or the sufficiency, of our inward motives and affections. But questions of plain morality are anterior to all these, and have the first and most pressing claim upon us. No man is called, no man is competent, to deal with the delicate interior postures and balancings of the soul between opposed attractions, until he has mastered his ethical rudiments, and learned to apply the Christian law to the simple duties of daily life. Nor is any religion of any worth which is not the animating and inspiring motive of a pure morality. So long as we have not renounced the rude and obvious sins of which the Israelites were guilty; so long as we take advantage of our influence or our wealth to wrong our neighbours, even though it be in what we call "the honest way of trade" or "the usual course of business"; so long as we take advantage of his ignorance, or his innocence, to promote our own interests at the expense of his; so long as, under any veil of secrecy or on any plea of custom, we indulge the lusts of the flesh; so long as we hide our greed under the sacred cloak of religion, or seek to atone for it by liberal donations or liberal bequests, we need to be sent back from the study of all higher questions, to learn the very alphabet of morality.

One of the subtlest, yet most common, temptations to which we of the Church are exposed is precisely this: we are tempted to maintain our religion at the expense of our morality. Conscious, or half-conscious, that our life must not be too closely examined, that it will not meet the highest tests, we plunge eagerly into theological speculations and ecclesiastical controversies, or suffer a Sectarian fervour to mount and glow within us. Hence in past ages

many an eminent Churchman thought absolutely nothing wrong by which he could serve the interests or supposed interests of the Church, and would sanction any vice, any crime, by which these interests might be served. And hence we see many a man to-day who is proud to bear the Christian name, and is busily occupied in what he takes to be the service of Religion, whose tongue nevertheless is not true, nor his hands clean; who, in the conduct of his business, will permit himself to be as unjust and unfair, as selfish and grasping, as the law or the customs of the market will allow.

Now these are the men, and these the sins, under which God groans, under which He is pressed, like as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves; for these are the sins which most of all profane his holy Name, and for which, in a very special sense, the world holds *Him* to be responsible.

Yet they are sins to which we all lie open, even the best of us. For it would be a fatal mistake to assume that only those are guilty of them who are animated, not by religion, but by that shallow pretentious religiosity which is at once the ape and the opposite of true Religion. Good men may and do deceive themselves, and sincere men fall into an unconscious insincerity. If we let Conscience speak, we shall *all* be compelled to confess that we are only too apt to take a selfish advantage both of our own influence, reputation, wealth (if we have any), and of our neighbour's ignorance or necessities; too apt to divorce our religion from the duties of our daily life and to serve our own interest at the cost of others.

And if we ask why these sins should be singled out as burdening and oppressing the heart of God, the answer of the Prophet is twofold. First of all, he tells us that these are the sins which profane the holy Name of God (Verse 7); which bring, as we have seen, his very character under suspicion, since men judge the Master by his servants, the

God by his worshippers. Or, to put the same thought in a more modern, a more tender and appealing, form; it is our very sins themselves which make Him groan—the baseness, the sadness, the misery of them. For what spectacle can be more offensive or more saddening to Him than to see his children, those who both acknowledge and claim Him for their Father, violating the law of righteousness and charity unconsciously, and therefore the more profoundly, and persuading themselves that they are serving Him by wronging their own souls?

And, again, he tells us that it is not only these sins by which we grieve the Father of our spirits, but also the miseries which we compel Him to inflict upon us in order that we may be chastened from our sins, the whips and scourges which by our offences we are preparing for our own backs. “Punishment is but *the other half* of sin.” By our sins, therefore, we are provoking, entailing, punishment. We are driving Him from his familiar work of mercy to his strange work of terror and rebuke. In Verses 14–16 the Prophet graphically describes the punishment by which the transgressions of Israel were to be scourged—a punishment which no swiftness of foot would enable them to outrun, no strength, no courage, enable them to turn aside: not an arbitrary, but a natural and inevitable punishment: for vice, injustice, hypocrisy, invariably and by a necessary law weaken a nation, and render it an easy prey to its foes.

But it is Verses 9–12 which import a special note of pathos into this Divine appeal. In the three previous Verses, the Prophet charges the men of Israel in the name of Jehovah with the three, nay, four transgressions for which He was about to visit and punish them. And now, over against these transgressions, Jehovah is portrayed as setting three, nay, four, of his mercies; and as so introducing them into his argument and appeal as to bring out

the full force of the contrast. His indictment is no sooner complete than He adds : “ *And yet* I destroyed the Amorite before you, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and whose strength was like that of the oaks ; yea, I destroyed his fruit from above and his roots from beneath. *And yet* I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to take possession of the land of the Amorite. *And yet* I raised up some of your sons as prophets, and some of your young men as Nazarites. Ah, is it not even so, O ye children of Israel ! ” Rendered thus, the very form of these words indicates the sorrowful and reproachful emotion, the wounded love, with which they are fraught. The pathetic iteration of the *And yet* with which the clauses commence, and the sigh or groan with which the passage concludes, can hardly fail to evoke a kindred and responsive emotion in every sensitive heart.

And, assuredly, when we turn from the form to the substance and intention of these Verses, they do not lose, but gain in power,—as a few words will suffice to indicate.

The earliest incident to which they refer, earliest in point of time, carries us back to the very inception of the national life. The whole history of Israel is coloured by the redemptive act with which it commenced,—its deliverance from the Egyptian house of bondage. Whether in chronicle or psalm, in prophetic homily or oracle, there is a perpetual allusion to the high hand and outstretched arm by which God broke their chains and brought them up out of Egypt, a perpetual appeal to that great deliverance as the strongest of all motives for obedience to his commandments, devotion to his service. Year by year, so often as he brought firstfruit or thankoffering to the Divine altar, every Israelite recited the simple but pregnant and musical formula : “ A Syrian ready to perish was my father ; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous : And

the Egyptians evil entreated us, and laid upon us hard bondage: And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our toils, and our oppression: And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, a land that floweth with milk and honey." (Deut. xxvi. 5-9).

No fact was more familiar to them, or more deeply wrought into the national consciousness, than this. The barest allusion to it was instantly taken; and it was admitted to be a most potent motive for gratitude, obedience, and trust. When, therefore, the Prophet represented Jehovah as closing his enumeration of the transgressions of Israel with this reproachful "And yet,"—"And yet I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to take possession of the land of the Amorite"—all who heard him would instantly feel the full force of the reproach. They would understand Him as contrasting his goodness to them with their disobedience to Him. And, not only so: they would also understand Him as contrasting his mercy to them with their unmercifulness to each other. They would catch the argument, charged with emotion, which was latent in the Divine appeal, and take Him to mean: "Was not I moved by your misery, by the wrongs and oppressions you suffered in Egypt, so moved that I came out of my place to avenge and deliver you. *And yet* you are inflicting a like misery on your very brethren, and oppressing one another even as the Egyptians oppressed your fathers."

The second mercy referred to in these Verses, second at least in point of time, was like unto the first, and conveyed a similar appeal. The Amorites were the great fighting clan of the hill country of Canaan, just as the Amalekites

were the great fighting clan of the Desert. And when the children of Israel had won their way through the perils and adventures of the Desert, and drew near to the promised land, their hearts fainted within them as they heard that they had still to encounter this fierce highland clan, under its renowned warrior-chiefs, Sihon of Heshbon and Og of Bashan. For they conceived of these highlanders very much as the feeble Egyptians now conceive of the Arabs of the Soudan, "the fierce mountaineers of the Red Sea littoral!" There were giants among them; therefore they were all giants, tall as cedars, strong as oaks, compared with whom *they* were but as "grasshoppers." And no doubt, all the exaggerations of fear apart, it was a most critical and perilous moment in their history. For, with this fierce military clan once swept out of their way, there was none left to bar their entrance into the goodly land; while, had they suffered defeat, the whole Arab race would probably have flung themselves upon them, and have hunted them down in the Wilderness. Happily for them, and for us, their victory was immediate and decisive; and, the Amorites being utterly broken and subdued, their road lay open before them, with none to make them afraid.

It is to this merciful intervention on their behalf in the hour of their utmost need—this "crowning mercy," as Cromwell would have called it—that Jehovah here refers: "*And yet* I smote the Amorites before you, smote them root and branch, although they seemed to you gigantic as the cedars, strong as the oaks." Nor would the appeal suggest only the great deliverance God had wrought for them. There were associations with the Amorites in the mind of every Israelite which would give it some such form as this:—"Did not I destroy the Amorites before you because the cup of their iniquity was full, and give you, called to be a holy people, the land which groaned under their unrighteous tyranny and unblushing vice? *And yet*

you are cherishing a greed as fierce as theirs, and indulging in the very vices for which they were destroyed !”

The third mercy referred to is a double mercy, and is really that by which the seed of Abraham was singled out and raised above the other races of men. When God had established them in the land promised to their fathers, He not only gave them a law by which their lives were to be ruled, and ordained priests to offer sacrifices for their sins ; He also gave them, in the prophets, examples of more than human wisdom ; and, in the Nazarites, examples of a more than legal righteousness : “ *And yet I raised up some of your sons as prophets, and some of your young men as Nazarites.*” By the prophets God had not only brought his law to bear on the duties of their daily life, and adapted it to every change in their outward and inward conditions ; He had also taught them a gospel of goodwill and peace, taught them that He was in very deed their Father as well as their Lord, that He both deserved and yearned for their love as well as for their obedience. By the Nazarites, He had convinced them, not alone that obedience to the law was possible, but that it might be voluntary and unforced ; nay, that a righteousness severer than that of the law might be attained : for the Nazarites were men who, besides yielding the law a direct obedience at every point, were moved by a strong inward impulse to dedicate themselves, freely, to the observance of vows by which they hoped to reach a more intimate communion with the Spirit of all holiness and to prepare themselves for a more perfect service, than the Law prescribed. Thus, living examples of Wisdom, Fidelity, and Righteousness, in the highest forms then conceivable, were set before them ; and in these examples, a standing invitation to that fear of the Lord which is at once the beginning of wisdom and the root of all holiness.

And how had they responded to this gracious invitation ?

Instead of accepting it, and growing in the knowledge of God and in zeal for his service, they had attempted, not always in vain, to drag down these high examples to their own base level; giving the Nazarites wine to drink, simply because they had vowed to drink no wine; and bidding the prophets, "Prophesy not," *i.e.* urging them to be untrue to the very function to which they were called. Instead of profiting by the mercies of God, they had obscured them to their own hurt. Instead of following the good examples He had sent them,—with that strange restless malignity which may be often seen in the profligate and disobedient, they had set themselves to corrupt these patterns of all piety, to make them as wicked and as miserable as themselves.

I need not labour to shew what added force and pathos this contrast between the mercies of God and the transgressions of men throws into the Divine complaint: "Behold, I am pressed under you like as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves," for, with this contrast once before us, we cannot but feel for ourselves that the Divine appeal sounds like a cry from "the depths of some Divine despair." It is as though the heart of the heavenly Father were fairly breaking under the burden imposed upon it by the sins and consequent miseries of his prodigal and disobedient children; as if, after having lavished such mercies and means of grace upon them, He were driven to conclude that He could do nothing more to recover them to a better mind, that the last resource of his love had been lavished on them in vain; as if He *must* give them up, and yet *cannot bear* to give them up.

That man is not to be envied who can at all enter into the meaning of such an appeal as this without being moved by it,—an appeal which must be true to the facts of the case if there is any truth in the tragedy of the Cross. For we have only to change the form of the appeal, only to

adapt it to our own history and conditions, and, lo, it is made to us, as well as to the sinners of Israel. "Have we not all one Father?" And is not the contrast between his mercies and our sins at least as sharp and strong in our case as it was in theirs? Has not God wrought redemption *for us*,—a greater redemption from a harder bondage than that of Egypt? Has He not brought us, in the face of many perils and many enemies, into the kingdom of his dear Son? Has He not given us examples of Wisdom and Righteousness more, and more honourable, than He gave to the Jews? *And yet* have we not often rebelled and transgressed against Him, abusing *our* mercies to our hurt, violating the very law of love and liberty, priding ourselves, like the Jews, on advantages which yet we have flung away, pluming ourselves on a superiority of privilege and standing which yet has not availed to save us from the most common vices, the most vulgar sins?

For, that we may not miss the force of this appeal, and lose ourselves in a vague general confession of guilt, we must once more remember that the transgressions which God here contrasts with his mercies and gifts are not those inward and mystic offences, those delicate failures in spiritual motive and affection, or that falling short of an ideal perfection, over which even the holiest saints must grieve, and which it takes the eye of a saint to detect. They are, on the contrary, the open, gross, and palpable sins—the worldliness, the selfishness, the injustice, the dishonesty, the greed, the immorality, the hypocrisy—which every code and every conscience condemn. We must bear in mind that—still like the Jews—we may so dwell on our religious privileges and advantages as that we may turn even these into inducements, occasions, or a cloak, for the very sins by which we make our Father grieve. For even this warning cannot be unnecessary while there are those among us who have so profound a

sense of sin that they cheerfully doom their *neighbours* to an everlasting torment, for transgressions not half so hateful to the great Lord and Lover of men as their own lack of charity, lacking which even the most pious and zealous are but as sounding brass and a clanging cymbal; or while there are those who, loudly proclaiming their aspirations after a "higher life," fall into the most vulgar forms of vice: or while there are those who assume to be holier than others, and yet carry themselves as though God had sent his Son into the world not to save, but to condemn the world, and who actually see in their sins against truth and charity signs of grace rather than proof of an evil heart of unbelief: or while there are those who, though they take a prominent place in the Church, are nevertheless guilty of such breaches of the common laws of veracity, honesty, and neighbourly goodwill as even plain men of the world, who make no profession of religion, would not suffer themselves to commit.

It is against such sins as these, which bring dishonour on Religion, which alienate men from it, and lead men to suspect or reject it, that God Himself warns us from his Word. He tells us that they make Him groan, that they press like an intolerable burden on his heart. He appeals to the mercies He has shewn us, the gifts He has conferred upon us, the redemption He has wrought for us, the standing of favour and grace into which He has brought us, the great examples of Wisdom and Righteousness He has set before us: and by all these He beseeches us to test and examine ourselves, that we may learn wherein we have offended against Him, and that we may turn from our wickedness and live. Despite our manifold offences, He still acknowledges us for his children, and begs us to spare Him the pain of punishing us after our sins and rewarding us according to our iniquities.

And if any man, as he has considered this pathetic

appeal, has bethought him of his neighbour's sins rather than his own, and deems that it has no message for him, let him assuredly know and understand that *he* most of all needs to take home its warning, and to yield to its tender but weighty reproach.

S. Cox.

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*THE JEWISH SABBATH AND THE LORD'S  
DAY.*

NOT a few earnest Christians who have received in their own spiritual life manifold and infinite benefit from the rest and leisure of the Lord's Day, and have found in this benefit an indisputable proof of its Divine origin and authority, have yet been perplexed by the scanty references to the Lord's Day in the New Testament, by the somewhat unfavourable tone of nearly all the references there to the Sabbath, and especially by three passages bearing on the subject in the Epistles of St. Paul. The New Testament proofs of the permanent and universal design of the Day of Rest are few, and at first sight doubtful. On the other hand, in Romans xiv. 5 St. Paul treats it as matter of indifference whether we esteem one day above another or all days of equal value. In Colossians ii. 16 he forbids any one to pronounce sentence on his readers in the matter of the Sabbath, which he classes with distinctions of food, and calls a shadow of coming things. And that the Galatian Christians observed "days," a term which must include the weekly Sabbath and probably refers to it specially, aroused in the Apostle a dark fear lest his labours for them be in vain.<sup>1</sup> All this affords matter for investigation. I shall therefore discuss in this paper the

<sup>1</sup> See Galatians iv. 11.