

God brings us into "strait places," and turns the brightness of day into the darkness of night. We are baffled and bewildered; what to do and where to turn we know not, in the unfamiliar gloom of our new situation. But the message is, "Be patient." Things are not so dark as we think them. In a little we shall get light—light even if we have not liberty, and discover we have companionship with us in the trial, the companionship of our brethren in whom the "same afflictions are accomplished"; while the promises and the precepts of our guide-book become legible and lustrous as before.

Creation and the Cross—The Angel of the Sabbath.—When in Venice a good many years ago, I was privileged to meet the late Mr. Bunney, R.A., the friend and *collaborateur* of Ruskin, and to have a long and interesting talk with him about the art-treasures with which the city abounds. I found him to be a man of fine Christian spirit, deeply imbued with a reverence for the religious side of the ancient designs he made it his business to study. He spent three days a week in St. Mark's, and gave special attention to the mosaics, not only as a subject of artistic interest, but a magazine of theological truth. Two things I remember him pointing out to me. One was, that in the dome that is devoted to scenes from the creation, the Creator is represented, not as is often the case in later and coarser art, as the First Person of the Trinity, but as the Second, a youthful figure, grasping the cross, or at any rate with the cross not far off, sometimes outlined in a shadow, and sometimes suggested in the trunk and branches of a tree. The conception not only

lends itself better to art, it is also in accordance with Scripture,—“God’s Son by Whom also He made the world.” A curious fact is, that in one, though only in one, of the scenes, the cross is omitted. It is the scene in which God is depicted as looking forth on the finished creation, and seeing it to be very good; as if the old artist’s thought were, that in the joy of completed work, the shadow had for the moment departed, the tragedy, of which the cross was the symbol, passed temporarily out of sight. Still more beautiful is the other piece of symbolism to which Mr. Bunney directed my attention. The Deity is represented on a throne, with a procession of angels in front. Six have already passed, but the seventh is kneeling before the throne, while He who sits on it grasps the cross in one hand, and lays the other hand on the angel’s head. So, “God blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” The illustration might be easily pursued. From that time to this the Angel of the Sabbath has been going her gracious rounds. It is true, she has changed her place, and, passing on to the front, leads the sisterhood of the days. But she still has the dew of God’s blessing on her hair. She still sheds the fragrance of His ivory palaces from her wings. She still brings the treasures of His bounty in her lap. Let us hail her as anointed with the oil of gladness above her companions, and open our homes and our hearts to her visits. As Herbert has it quaintly—

“Thou art a day of mirth :
And where the week-days trail on ground,
Thy flight is higher, as thy birth :
O let me take thee at the bound,
Leaping with thee from sev’n to sev’n,
Till that we both, being tossed from earth,
Fly hand in hand to heaven.”

Short Expository Papers.

Isaiah xiii. 2-xiv. 23, and Zephaniah.

THE part of Isaiah being studied by members of the “Guild” extends to the end of chapter xxxix. It is well known that the remainder of the book is thought by most critics to belong to a later period. But also within the first section are several passages which are supposed from internal evidence to belong to a time later than that of the historical Isaiah. These passages are as

follows:—Chaps. xiii.-xiv., xxi., xxiv.-xxvii., and xxxiv.-xxxv.

Zephaniah flourished some two or three reigns later than the Isaiah of Hezekiah’s time. It is therefore natural that we should expect to find many echoes of Isaiah’s prophecies in the Book of Zephaniah. This we find to be the case; but the remarkable fact is that when Zephaniah echoes the thought or the language of Isaiah, it is nearly always the passages which, though included in the

Book of Isaiah, give internal evidence of being post-Isaianic. There are quotations from the part of the prophecies attributed by critics to Isaiah, but these are far outweighed in number and importance by the quotations from the other prophet or prophets included in Isaiah.

Compare, for instance, the references in Zephaniah to Isaiah xiii. 2-xiv. 23. It will be noticed that sometimes Zephaniah seems to gather up thoughts or expressions in one sentence or verse from the above-mentioned portion of Isaiah, and also from some quite different part of the book. In these cases the other part is always some passage supposed to belong to the other prophecies included in the Book of Isaiah. Occasionally the expression is found in Isa. xiii. and in some other prophet. Then the other prophet is usually Jeremiah or Ezekiel, both being prophets of the Exile.

Isa. xiii. 3 reads, "I have commanded my consecrated ones . . . even my proudly exulting ones." Zeph. i. 7 reads, "The Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath sanctified His guests." The sacrifice is the slaughter of a nation; the "consecrated ones," or "the sanctified guests," are the men of war prepared by Jehovah for the work of slaughter. This strange use of קָרַשׁ in the Hiph. and the Pual participle occurs elsewhere only in Jer. xxii. 7, "I will sanctify destroyers against thee."

It may also be noticed that this verse in Zephaniah uses זָבַח, a sacrifice, to describe the slaughter of a people. Isaiah uses it in the same sense in xxxiv. 6, "The Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom." It is similarly used only in Jer. xlvi. 10 and Ezek. xxxix. 17. Then again this expression, עֲלִיזֵי בְּאִוְתִי, "my proudly exulting ones," in Isa. xiii. 3, occurs also in Zeph. iii. 11, עֲלִיזֵי בְּאִוְתֶךָ, "thy proudly exulting ones," and in Isa. xxiv. 8, עֲלִיזִים, "those that exult."

In Isa. xiii. 4 the word קוֹל is placed at the head of a sentence, giving it almost the force of an interjection. "The noise of a multitude in the mountains! The noise of a tumult of the kingdoms!" In Zeph. i. 14 a similar use of this word is found, "The voice of the day of the Lord." I do not think there is any other instance of a similar use.

In Isa. xiii. 7 is the sentence, "therefore all hands shall be feeble," עַל-כֵּן כָּל-יָדַיִם תִּרְפְּיֶנָּה. Also in Zeph. iii. 16, "Let not thy hands drop," אַל-

יִרְפוּ יָדַיִךְ. It is found also in Isa. xxxv. 3, "strengthen ye the feeble hands," יִדְרִים רַפּוֹת.

Isa. xiii. 17 reads, "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it." Zeph. i. 18 says of those who shall be in distress because of their assailants, "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath." These words are almost identical with Ezek. vii. 19.

Putting together Isa. xiii. 21 and xxxiv. 11, we read, "But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures." "The pelican and the porcupine shall possess it." How much this reminds of Zeph. ii. 14, "Will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like the wilderness. And herds shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the chapters thereof!"

Compare Isa. xiv. 2 and onwards with Zeph. ii. 9, 10. "The house of Israel shall possess them (*i.e.* their oppressors) in the land of the Lord for servants and for handmaids: and they shall take them captive, whose captives they were," and "The residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my nation shall inherit them. This they shall have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts."

What the explanation of these coincidences may be does not very readily appear. Perhaps some readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES may be able to suggest some solution. Perhaps Zephaniah did not use the prophet in Isaiah, but may have been used by him. Maybe a school of prophets during the Exile were familiar with the later pre-Exilian prophets, as also with the prophets of the Exile, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Whatever the solution be, these coincidences can scarcely be *mere* coincidences.

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Christ Dying for Friends.

OUR Lord when He enjoined His disciples to love one another gave His own love as the example and measure of that precept. "Greater love, He said, hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He was referring to His own death on the morrow.

It is worth noticing carefully that our Lord calls these for whom He gives up His life, His friends. Dr. Martineau finds in that description a reference to "the selective power of Christ's presence." All whose admirations are roused by the beauty of the soul of Jesus, and the heroic sacrifice of His death, and who are won by the contemplation of His higher spirit to feel deep reverence for Him, and to become like-minded with Him, are looked upon by Jesus as His friends. They are attracted out of the vast circle of those who are indifferent, and of those who are opposed to Him, and drawn into the select company of those like-minded ones whose hearts are taken captive by goodness, and who cherish a loving regard for Him, and faith in Him as their inspiration and their guide. It seems to me, however, that these words of the Incarnate Logos go deeper than that. By speaking of those for whom He died as "His friends," Christ Jesus was pointing not so much to the nature of these elect souls who should be drawn to Him as to the nature of His own death as being a sacrifice of love. The peculiar greatness and glory of that death indeed are just here, that it was a loving self-sacrifice for the sake of those whom He looked upon as friends.

We are accustomed to think of the wonder of Christ's death rather as being a sacrifice made for evil men who in heart were rebels against the Father's will, and who deserved not His loving-kindness. And there is a great truth in that way of regarding it. The Apostle Paul states that view of Christ's death. He speaks of us being reconciled to God by the death of His Son, while we were enemies. He points out, too, how the fact that Christ died for us while we were sinners reveals a love in God passing our thought. That is true; it is the truth which should be present to our heart and minds; but it presupposes Christ's description of us as His friends, and the words of Christ tell the greater wonder. The fact that Christ died for men who cared not for Him, and who were fighting against all that He held dear, who were, in fact, enemies to Him and goodness, reveals to us something of the divine quality of love; it shows us what love is, and to what heights of sacrifice it can attain. But the wonder of the death of Christ is not in the greatness of the sacrifice, however great it was, but simply in the fact that it was a sacrifice of love. When He who loves is the eternal Son of God, no greatness or

lofty unexpectedness of sacrifice can be any marvel.

Help, that even demands self-sacrifice on the part of the helper, may be given apart from love. In his poem, "The Dream of Man," Mr. William Watson tells how humanity conquered all enemies, and put away every hindrance and obstacle, and in the end bound man's last enemy Death, so that at length no dark shadow lay across man's world. But then when nought was left to strive for, life became intolerable; in his uttermost despair, man cried to God for help—

"And God from His lonely height,
From eternity's passionless summits,
On suppliant man looked down;
And His brow waxed human with pity,
Belying its awful crown."

And in that pity God helped men; He set death free, and gave back to men "the joy of most glorious striving." There is pity there,—pity that leads to help. But pity is not love. Its gifts lack the enriching presence of love. Its greatest gifts, its mightiest helps are less than the helping smile of love; for He who loves gives Himself, and not any mere external good, and any gift of love is a prophecy of a perfect self-sacrifice, if need were.

The Son of God might conceivably have died for His enemies, the sinful rebels of mankind, apart from love. A God of infinite pity might have looked down from heaven and seen the misery of men; He might even have come down and died, if need were, to save them from misery, and make a better, happier life theirs. An infinite benevolence reigning in the skies might so have blessed men. And yet all the time men might have been kept afar off, helped out of pity, succoured with gifts cast down from a lofty seat of unbending superiority; they might have been blessed by a kind power that only cared not to hear the groans of misery, or know of any pain in the world over which He ruled. In all that, there is not the infinite condescension of love. But Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, tells us that it was friends He died for. He did not seek to bless us from afar. He came down to save us from the doom of sin, because, first of all, in love He had honoured and glorified us by regarding us as friends. He died to save us not simply out of compassion or tender-heartedness, but because He had shrined us in His heart, and desired to share with us the joy and richness of the heart inter-

cession of friends. That is a condescension of love that exalts our conception of the Divine nature. Eternal love is an infinitely richer conception than eternal benevolence. And when we realise that fact, does not the gospel story commend itself to our belief in that one convincing way left to a divine revelation which necessarily speaks to us of things our eyes have never seen, nor our ears heard? God is the Highest we can know. To think that we can frame a conception higher and richer than the Divine Reality is absurd. If then the gospel of the Divine Love in Christ exalt and enrich our notion of God, we cannot but believe it true. And the fact told there how God not only pitied and helped us, but loved us and gave Himself a sacrifice for us,—outward symbol on the earth of that greater personal sacrifice of love in heaven,—gives such a glorious exaltation and enriching to our idea of Him.

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John i. 13.

“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

THE effect of this threefold negation of an earthly source of spiritual life is much weakened in the above translation. The Revised Version notes an important alteration in the margin, but gives the Authorised Version translation in the text. The following is given as a suggestion of the true translation and interpretation:—

(1) “*Not of bloods*”—οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων. The reference is not to “plurality of ancestors” or duality of parentage, but to tribal or ethnic distinctions. Spiritual life is not settled by nationality. No man receives it, or is deprived of it, because the blood of a particular tribe flows or does not flow in his veins. It is not a matter of bloods. This denial is put first, in an emphatic position, because the Jews believed that their tribal or national privilege, that their descent from Abraham, secured the spiritual birthright.

(2) “*Nor of the will of flesh*”—οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκός. It is here denied that spiritual life depends on the volition of the natural man. We find a fuller statement of this negation in John iii. 3, 6: “Ye must be born from above. . . . That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Man as man cannot convey spiritual life to those whom he begets.

There is no reference here to sensual impulse or passion. It is not the flesh as sinful, but as natural that is here described as powerless to quicken spiritual life. The human race as a whole and by its constitution cannot attain to this.

(3) “*Nor of the will of a man*”—οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός. It is not the will of man (ἄνθρωπος) but the will of *a* man (ἄνθρω) which is referred to here. The denial of the will of man (ἄνθρωπος) is included in (2), the denial of the will of flesh. Here it is the will of any individual man, especially in his relation as a husband (cf. the Scottish use of “man” with the same significance). Spiritual life does not depend on the will of an earthly father. It can be quickened by no physical act. It comes from above, from the will and act of God alone.

Therefore the translation which best expresses the meaning of the Greek is: “Which were born not of bloods, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God.”

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Did Christ Baptize?

IN John iii. 22 we read that “Jesus came and His disciples into the land of Judæa; and there He tarried with them, and baptized.” Also in ver. 26 of the same chapter we are told how John the Baptist’s disciples came unto him with the complaint: “Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou hast borne witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him.” These passages certainly convey the impression that Jesus at this time was not only preaching but also baptizing, and that large numbers were receiving the sacred rite at His hands.

In John iv. 2, however, there is another reference to the subject. We are told there in parentheses that “Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples.” The conclusion, therefore, seems to be that the group of earnest men whom the Saviour had already gathered around Him were baptizing the people who flocked to hear Him, but that whilst He directed and controlled them in the matter, He Himself did not baptize. Another question of interest arises, viz. What was the nature of this baptism? Was it simply John’s baptism of repentance, or a higher rite which Christ had already instituted? Perhaps this very matter was discussed at the time between the

disciples of John and those of Jesus, for we read, in iii. 25, that "there arose a questioning on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purifying." What more natural than that the disciples of Christ should contend that the baptism of their Master was more valuable and perfect than that of His forerunner?—a contention which John's disciples would not be likely to admit. And if such was the question of dispute, probably the latter were right. Jesus Himself received baptism at the hands of John. The opening words of His Gospel also were a re-echo of John's own teaching: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It seems as though for a very brief period Jesus preached in harmony with John of a *coming* kingdom, and also through His disciples administered the rite of baptism unto repentance. If Christ had indeed at this early stage instituted a higher baptism as the symbol of His own ministry and kingdom, it would doubtless have been administered by Himself to His disciples, and we should hear more of it as the Gospel advances. But there is no evidence that this was the case. With the disappearance of John, Jesus and His disciples baptize no longer. Christ's own baptism is the baptism of fire, but the time for that is not yet. That will be inaugurated upon the day of Pentecost, after the kingdom has been fully established by the life, the cross, and the empty grave.

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Genesis vi. 9.

"Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God."

BRIEF as this outline is, it is full enough for us to form a sufficient estimate of the man's character, and to understand why he "found grace in the eyes of the Lord" beyond all his contemporaries.

I. *Noah was a man of highest moral and spiritual integrity.*—"Noah was a just," or, as the Revised Version translates, "a righteous man." The term "righteous" is a wide and strong one. It covers the entire range of a man's conduct in all its outward relations toward both God and man. Every man sustains a dual relationship in this world. That is, he sustains a relationship toward God as his Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Lord; and

toward men as his fellow-beings. The duties belonging to these relationships are profoundly expressed in the condensed summary of the law of the ten words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, . . . and thy neighbour as thyself." Fulfilment of this is in the highest sense righteousness. Obedience to the Divine law in its Godward and manward aspect characterised the life of Noah in contradistinction to the men of his time, who owned no law, human or divine; see ver. 5.

II. *Noah was a whole-souled man.*—"Perfect in his generations." The term "perfect" is misleading, and conveys more than the historian intended. All that I think he would have us understand is that Noah was a man whose moral and spiritual nature were sound and healthy. The outward righteousness of his life proceeded from no sordid motive, or cool, calculating policy, "Will it pay?" He who acts honestly simply because "honesty is the best policy," and not out of love to the virtue, it is to be feared has very little of it in his heart. The man who is religious on the plan of Bye-Ends has no root of the matter in him. If the fountain be pure, the waters will be wholesome. Because the fountain, whence proceed the issues of life, was healthy and pure, Noah's righteousness was of the high tone which met the Divine approval.

Further, because his heart was whole in all its powers and affections his religion was sympathetic and full of charity, and he became the one preacher of righteousness in an age which set at nought all that was right.

III. *Noah's delight was in God.*—That is one of the meanings underlying the phrase, he "walked with God." It was his pleasure and his delight to be with God. According to the company a man habitually keeps, will be the tendency of his life. Noah delighted in the best of company, hence the healthy wholeness and spiritual beauty and righteousness of his life. The phrase, "Noah walked with God," implies

(a) *Constant communion with God.*—Through constant fellowship his soul gathered wisdom and strength to stand faithfully amid the awful wickedness which surrounded him.

(β) *That he lived his life in God.*—Compare here Gal. ii. 20; Phil. i. 21. Of the same tone and temper was Noah's life.

But no picture of Noah's life is complete which omits one sad blemish which appeared in after

days. Good man as he was, unyielding in the days of temptation and trial, when the strain was passed he proved that "the best of men are only men at the best," and therefore fallible; and therefore the constant remembrance of "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

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From Light to Darkness: from Darkness to Light.

ISAIAH viii. 18-22; ix. 2.

THE experience of Israel is here described in three pictures, each marking a distinct stage in that experience.

I. Israel rejecting the light. (1) The prophet comes with a Divine message to his people. So completely is his whole life devoted to the task of witnessing for God among them that his very personality is lost in his message. He himself and his children are for signs (viii. 18), their names, as it were, vouchers for the truth which he sets forth; Isaiah, the salvation of the Lord (deliverance comes not by might nor by power, not, *e.g.*, by such devices as Ahaz resorted to, an alliance with Assyria and the strengthening of the fortifications of Jerusalem, but by the Spirit of the Lord); Shear-jashub, *Remnant Return*—a sign more ominous, speaking of the judgment as well as the mercy of God; Maher-shalal-hashbaz, *Speed-spoil-hurry-prey*—a yet gloomier portent, certifying that judgment is inevitable and must soon descend. The people will not believe: (a) from inability, being unused to exercise simple trust in God; (b) from pride, for the mingling of judgment with mercy in Isaiah's message offends them. They will not believe one who prophesies so much evil, so Isaiah's warnings, like Cassandra's predictions, fall on incredulous ears. (2) Disbelieving Isaiah, and finding no help in human wisdom, they turn like Saul in his extremity, with the proverbial credulity of unbelief, to the oracles of necromancy. The old watchword of religion, "To the law and to the testimony!" "Should not a people seek unto their God?" are forgotten. "For those who act thus," says Isaiah, "there is no morning dawn," for they wilfully turn from the light.

II. A time comes when Isaiah's warnings are fulfilled. Calamity, famine, distress drive the people to despair. There is no voice of hope

from their wizards and soothsayers. Haunted by the memory of the time when the watchword of faith might have saved them, they feel that they have grieved the Spirit and He is gone! Around and within them is nothing but the gloom of despair, as "hardly bestead and hungry they pass through the land and curse their king and their God."

III. In the midst of their despair, they look upwards, scarce knowing why. All other helpers failing, they direct towards heaven a despairing glance, as if hardly daring to think of God's help, and then at last light shines through the gloom.

Thus the prophet pictures the experience of Israel, and of the individual soul in a similar case.

1. Israel's disregard of the prophet's warning and neglect of Jehovah's law, because they set forth the truth in forms distasteful to human pride. What avails simple faith in God when the enemy is thundering at the gates? Where is comfort in a message like Isaiah's; so strangely blending mercy with judgment? If the old religion gives no help, let us turn to some other source of comfort.

2. Retribution came. The overrunning flood swept away the refuges of lies. Israel was driven to darkness, the gloom of hopeless captivity for the majority, of destitution for the remnant left behind.

3. In the darkness taught, like Manasseh, to know their helplessness, suffered to feel their weight, they looked upwards, and the Divine light beamed forth, the light of mercy and salvation.

Such also may be the experience of an individual soul. First, the Divine warning is despised, and the Word of God neglected, set aside as a worn-out superstition. The voice of religion seems to have lost its hold upon such a soul. Then all manner of refuges are tried, alliance with the world-power—immersion in secular business; the superstition of unbelief, Agnosticism, etc. All in their turn fail to alleviate the weary heartache which prompts the cry, "Who will show us any good?" The whole universe seems out of joint, and the soul hardly bestead and hungry curses its king and its God, the whole order of things in the world, and every form of religion alike, the false and the true. At length, in very despair, as if feeling "it is no use, 'for me there is no morning dawn,'" the soul looks upwards. The darkness is past, the true light now shineth, the soul that walked in darkness and the shadow of death sees the salvation of the Lord.

Keig.

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