

postulates Deuteronomy and Joshua quite as much as these presuppose Genesis or Exodus. This solidarity of the Pentateuch Astruc has entirely failed to observe. The consequence is serious, inasmuch as it penetrates to the heart of his theory, the alternation of the names Elohim and Jehovah. *This alternation does not cease with Exodus 2*, as indeed Astruc himself perceived. But while the latter, with reason, scouts the idea that the names are interchanged in Genesis 'in order to vary the style' (p. 12), he is compelled to assume, almost in the same breath, that in *the following books* Elohim, when used at all, is used *pour varier le style* (p. 14). It was reserved for Astruc's successors to make the fundamental discovery that the documents which meet us in Genesis go with us to the close of the Pentateuch. Every theory,

consequently, that is based on a supposed distinction between the linguistic and other characteristics of Genesis and those of the other books is built on air.<sup>1</sup>

The irony of history is proverbially cruel. Of this, we have a conspicuous illustration in the case of Jean Astruc. He, the champion of the Mosaic tradition against *les prétendus Esprits-forts*, has had to submit to be classed as one of the arch-enemies of religion, and now lives in history as the man who, in the hope of infusing new life into a moribund tradition, in reality dealt that tradition its deathblow.

<sup>1</sup> Detailed proof of this statement from a competent hand will be found in Canon Driver's article, 'Principal Cave on the Hexateuch,' in *The Contemporary Review* for February 1892.

## Sermonettes on the Golden Texts.

BY THE REV. JOHN KELMAN, M.A., PETERCULTER.

### The God of House and City.

'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.'—Ps. cxxvii. 1.

THIS has often been taken to be a reference to Solomon's temple. No doubt there is a special fitness in such a reference; we remember how David earnestly desired to build a house for the Lord, and yet died leaving the task to his son, for he had never been satisfied that God would approve of and bless him in the undertaking.

It seems more likely, however, that it is a Song of the Restored Jerusalem—a 'Table-Song,' sung by the head of a household as he sat at the table where his family were gathered, at 'family worship' as we would say to-day. It is a psalm of everyday domestic life rather than of memorable occasions and great events. It takes us back to ancient days, and presents the pictures of two sides of simple life—house and city, building and watching,—the chief works representing peace and war.

Israel's *architecture* was a poor affair compared with that of other nations she knew of. Edom, Bashan, Assyria, Babylon, Egypt—each in its own

style might claim to have reached something more eternal and more worthy of song than the hastily-constructed dwellings that rose on Israel's return from the East. Her *military defences*, too, were weak. She had been taunted sorely concerning the walls of her new Jerusalem. Now the city walls had risen, and towers sprang from their corners, and gates of wood and metal again swung on deep-set hinges; and as the darkness settled down and the gates were closed, a lamp lit and shining from the little slit in the wall above the gate, showed what before was hardly noticeable—the chamber of the watchman who went his rounds armed with lamp and sword.

Poor though all this was, it was her own. And had not Israel been a people chastened and taught of God, her buildings and defences might well have made her self-sufficient. These were everyday familiar things. One knew how they were done, and all about them. As they saw house after house rise successfully from foundation-stone to roof, and as night followed night with no alarm, a sense of security, and of the efficiency of human appliances to produce intended results, might well have come upon them.

Yet in building and in defence, Israel had had

lessons, and had learned that even when men do their best they cannot make sure. There was the old story of the Tower of Babel, and the new story of the Siege of Babylon. These, and many another experience, had convinced religious Israel of the 'Divinity that shapes our ends,' and her psalms were full of the acknowledgment of God as Master-BUILDER, and as Great Watchman and Defence.

The lesson is for all time, that in human undertakings God has to be reckoned with. And now, as then, it is for the simpler and more everyday side of life that this lesson is most required. Great and tragic events thrust the thought of God upon us. What we need most to learn is that we dare not let the common drift and interest of life go on without that thought. We cannot afford to forget God in the daily building and the nightly watching; either God must build and watch with us, or He will overturn our building and make our watching vain.

I. BUILDING may stand for the productive labour of the daily life. However valuable it seems, all of it that is done without reference to Him will survive only as wreckage. All that is 'begun, continued, and ended in Him' will last for eternity. This used to be acknowledged by many beautiful customs, of which our grace before meat is almost the sole survivor. John Knox's house in Edinburgh has carved on one of its stones,

Deus  
Deus  
God

and the lintel of another old

Edinburgh house, now familiar to many, bears the inscription, 'Blissit be God in al His works.' Long ago the harvest-field, the launch of ships, the start of fishing-fleets were consecrated by special prayer. These ceremonies are gone, but the need for what they signified remains. The secret of success in labour is to realise God as the fellow-labourer of man. The motto of all labour ought to be, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.'

II. In the STRUGGLE and DEFENCE of life,—political, social, and private,—we need to remember the same lesson. Luther, Cromwell, Knox believed in God as a real force for national defence, and God did not belie their trust in Him. Nor will He honour our ignoring Him. To-day, too often, men commit themselves to the persuasion that

God is always 'on the side of the strongest battalions.' Too often, one would think, public questions are considered too difficult for God to manage, too complex to commit to conscience; we must arrange them ourselves. And what we need most to learn is, that the main question for safety and success is whether God be with us in the thing that we do. The same principle applies to our individual efforts after health, money, learning, position. God's approval and God's defence are real factors—they are in the longrun *the* real factors—in all the departments of the human struggle.

And this holds of the innermost life of spiritual labour and defence—the building of the house of character, the guarding of the city of the soul. By the mere force of will and watchfulness we cannot attain to goodness, nor yet ward off temptation. 'Thou also hast wrought all our works in us.' The practical sense of this is just Christianity, that which renders possible and which completes morality. It is faith, without which works are vain, 'Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God which worketh in you.'

### The Religion of Silence.

'But the Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him.'—HAB. ii. 20.

THERE are two ways of seeing landscape. You may go along the valleys and admire 'bits' of fine scenery; or you may stand upon a height and view the scene in great stretches, of river-course and mountain-range, each with its own unity of character and meaning. Habakkuk viewed the history of his times in the latter fashion. He wrote at a time when men felt themselves on the eve of great things. Looking forward in vision he describes two great marches—the march of the Chaldeans from the north, driving all before them, and the counter-march of Jehovah from the south, scattering the nations. Between the descriptions of these two marches there is a point of pause in the prophecy, filled for the most part with cries of woe against the invaders. He says many things against them, but he ends with this, that all their wicked work has been done on a false trust. Knowing not of that God who was only biding His time and preparing to march forth and meet them, they were

driving on wildly and blindly, trusting in wood and stone gods they carried with them, and not realising that these were helpless, imprisoned in their gold and silver cases, and useless for aid.

Who was He that was to march forth to meet them? He was that Jehovah for whom Israel had built her temple—a temple without a statue or image of its God. From the first she had cried, 'Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?' And so Israel had grasped the high thought of the Temple of the Universe—the only fit conception for the house where Jehovah dwells, invisible but infinitely real.

It is this magnificent thought that inspires our text, with its call for silence from the whole earth. The gold-cased stocks that were men's idols are seen here in all their pettiness. Before them no man can keep silence. They are only tolerable while men drive on in headlong thoughtlessness. They cannot live through an hour of silent thinking. But that silence and thought—the supreme test of reality—is what Jehovah demands. Only thus can His reality be felt and His infinitude imagined.

The God thus known by Israel is our God, and it is in silence that we realise Him best. Amid the bustle and noise of life—when all the world we live in has become to us a market-place, or a workshop, or a battlefield, or a pleasure-ground—we catch only stray glimpses of our God. But all the great silences lead to revelation. The silence of early morning sunlight, or of night with its star-spaces; the silence of the past, when we seek to understand history, or of the future when we seek to pierce the mists of death; in these God is most plainly revealed, and the world becomes His temple.

We all speak too much, and make too much noise. Everyone has felt irritated sometimes, when in thoughtful mood he could not escape from people's voices. A panorama of the Alps from a Swiss mountain-top may be spoiled even by the cries of '*Wunder-schön!*' No one can worship rightly, no one can even hear the call to worship, who does not often feel that he must be silent. This is the religious aspect of the modern demand for more leisure time. And one of the things we most of all need to learn and teach, is how to use the leisure that we are demanding, so that our 'silences may be blessed with sweet thoughts.'

For worship, there are three main uses of silence—

1. To get rid of evil voices that speak within us. Passion, selfishness, self-assertion, lust, fear, are voices that cry within the souls of most men more than they know. Their cries mingle with the other noises of life, and so escape notice. But when the soul is hushed for worship it can distinguish any such voice, will feel its wrongness, and be at pains to silence it. There are many thoughts we dare not allow when we realise ourselves in God's holy temple. The silence which discovers and banishes these is a means of moral victory.

2. To let the 'still small voices' be heard within. Often busy people feel that there are many things in their mind and heart which they can only half express, even to themselves. Wordsworth describes these in his Ode on Immortality. The reason why these are so inexpressible is often our want of silence rather than our spiritual incapacity. There are some scientific instruments so fine that to do their work they must be set at night in a quiet country-house far from traffic. The mind and heart and conscience are such instruments. All that is best in us of thought and feeling exceeds speech. When we try to speak out all that we want to say, we know how true it is that 'language is a means of concealing thought.' But in reverent silence, thought and love and the sense of right and wrong, in finer shades than language can match, may be drawn out, and the soul attain a richer and fuller being in this temple of God than elsewhere.

3. To know God. For there is more to be had than the quickening of human nature to its fullest life. There is a Presence in the world; one whose thought we share, whose love we feel, and whose voice speaks in conscience. That which the finest spirits prize most in silence and loneliness is the real companionship they reveal. We know ourselves alone, yet not alone, for the Father is with us. The holy temple is the place of revelation and communion for its silent worshippers.

Sometimes, in our dulness, we grudge the silence of the holy temple, and wish that God would speak to our senses, if only for a moment, so that we might be sure of Him for ever. And, to meet the need of our humanity, God broke the silence when 'the Word became flesh.' The

words of Christ remain for us, and teach us through the silence to hear the Eternal voice.

### Concerning Riches.

'The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it.'—PROV. x. 22.

I. WHAT RICHES ARE.—Ignorant people think that a man's riches consist in the number of pieces of gold, silver, copper, or paper-money which he can call his own. But those who think, know that money is not riches, but the things that money can buy. A rich man is one who has what he needs to eat and wear and use in plenty. On a desert island, diamonds would not make a man rich, but fruit-trees would; a gun and a box of cartridges would be worth more to him than a shipload of gold.

People who think more deeply still, find that there is yet a better kind of riches. There are things which enrich us more than any quantity of commodities which we can eat or wear or use. A good name, a right character; love of friends, interest in work and books; a clean conscience, a tender heart, an educated mind; a pure heart and high thoughts,—these are truer riches. And, above all, contentment is riches; for however little the contented man has, he has all that he wants, and surely that is to be rich. That was what made Goldsmith's village schoolmaster 'passing rich on forty pounds a year.' These two kinds of riches may be called *outward* and *inward* riches; the outward riches consist in what a man *has*, the inward in what he *is*.

II. HOW TO GET RICHES.—Our text tells us that 'the blessing of the Lord maketh rich.' Everyone who knows anything about the matter must see that this is true of inward riches. We cannot force character nor yet contentment. It is our duty to strive for them, and they cannot be had without striving. Yet, after all, when they come to us, they come as gifts of God, not as wages. And the question of how to grow rich *inwardly*—how to be what we ought to be—resolves itself into the other question, How to get God's blessing. Christ is the answer,—offering Himself freely to everyone,—Christ 'who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich.'

In regard to the outward riches, many people

think that the blessing of the Lord has nothing to do with them. Prudence, diligence, and cleverness are all that they think are needed. Indeed, some go further and say that it is not possible for a man to carry out in his business strictly correct Christian principle, which just means that the blessing of the Lord keepeth poor instead of maketh rich.

Well, suppose it did, it would be worth while to give up the riches for the blessing. Dead men do not own a pennyworth of the outward riches they had, but they carry with them into eternity all their inward riches. Outward riches are at best only a trust, which we hold for a few years; inward riches are a possession, inalienably our own. But if men, for the sake of outward riches, do shady things; if they 'make haste to be rich,' so as to make themselves mere drudges and slaves to the world, they pay away the inward riches for the outward. Such men may die worth a million, and yet be bankrupt in soul; they have beggared themselves in getting rich. That is bad financing. It does not pay. None of us can afford to get rich, except by God's blessing.

But it is not true that in order to gain outward riches we must part with inward. 'Honesty is the best policy,' and 'godliness with contentment is great gain, having the promise of this life,' as well as of the next. It is a mischievous falsehood that nowadays money is only to be made by means that God will not bless. Straight dealing may cost a man chances of gain now and then, but in the longrun it always pays.

III. WHAT RICHES BRING WITH THEM.—Inward riches, of course, have no drawbacks; but outward riches always have, if God's blessing comes not with them. People who do not seek God's blessing with their riches forget this. Wealth looks very fair when we do not see what it has brought with it. It is often like a burdened estate, whose heir has to inherit also its mortgage. Many a man who was happy when he was poor, is miserable after he grows rich; and many a poor man, looking enviously on his rich neighbour, sees only the clothes and jewellery, and forgets to count the wrinkles. In estimating the worth of riches, we must take account not only of their amount, but of how much sorrow has come with them.

Sorrow may be added *in the getting* of outward wealth. Usually men have worked hard for it—often too hard. Ill-health, overstrained nerves, excitement, habits of restlessness and anxiousness

come with it. But the blessing of the Lord keeps the soul calm, and restrains it from wearing itself out, for it gives the man another aim in life, and sets his enthusiasm towards a prize which he is sure of winning. And sorrow may be added to outward wealth *when it is got*. Horace describes the rich man riding out in fine style, but 'dark Care' sitting on the horse behind him. Sometimes men find the management of their wealth—keeping and investing it—a heavy business. There is the vexation of losses here and there, and the tormenting fear of losing all. But the blessing of the Lord keeps a man from such sorrow, for it sets his heart on that higher treasure that cannot be lost.

But these are not the worst sorrows that may come with outward wealth. If a man has betrayed his conscience, and sold his innocence for wealth; if he has become hard, selfish, sordid, then surely his riches have added sorrow to him. And as he remembers certain things he has done to get money, he falls into shame and sometimes into horror; for he must give in his account to God. And ill-gotten riches often add sorrow to others, as well as to the man himself. His luxury is paid for by the bread of the poor man whom he underpaid, or by the sin of those whom his business tempted. It is needless to say that riches made with the blessing of the Lord adds none of these sorrows.

In a word, God does not grudge men riches, only He desires that all riches shall be such that He can bless them. Inward riches are sure of His blessing. As for outward riches, they also may be blessed. An old rhyme runs—

Unto what is money good?  
Who lacketh that lacks hardihood;  
Who hath it hath much trouble and care;  
Who once hath had it hath despair.

That is true of riches got without God's blessing. But of riches blessed by God it is not true. With such riches He addeth no sorrow.

### **A Promise with a Condition.**

'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'—PROV. iii. 6.

THE whole section, from vers. 5–12, forces us back on God. We are to 'trust,' 'acknowledge,' 'fear,' 'honour' Him, to 'despise not His chastening,' nor 'be weary of His correction.' In our text we

meet God in connexion with the most famous of all the Hebrew figures, the Way. The history of Israel is a story of journeyings. First, we have Abram's journey from Ur to the Land of Promise; then the journeys to Egypt; across the desert to Palestine; from the country to Jerusalem at feast-seasons; and the journeys eastward to exile, and home again to their native land. This history set for Israel her typical metaphor. 'The Way' was taken by the prophets and preachers as an emblem of man's life, moral and religious. Life was a 'Pilgrim's Progress'; man, a traveller setting out through unknown tracts where it was death to lose himself, with God's house for destination at the journey's end.

Here we are told that guidance is to be had for the journey. There are countless false paths, but no traveller needs to take any of them. There is always the right way for every man at every moment, and it is always possible to find it. Now there are many rules by which men seek guidance. There are some men who seem always to do the right thing and say the right word. If we asked them how this comes to pass, some of them might tell us it was by shrewdness and common-sense, and others that they watched and followed the footprints of men who had gone before them. But men who can tell us no more than that are not so sure as they seem to be. There are places in every life where common-sense is bewildered, and where no one we know of has been before us. The Bible has better news for us. It tells us that there is One whom every traveller may have for his Guide. God knoweth the way that we take, and those whom He guides 'hear a word behind them saying, This is the Way, and walk ye in it.' In other words, God makes the minds of those whom He guides clear, so that they act wisely, and He makes their consciences sensitive and correct, so that they act rightly.

But how are we to get this guidance? It will not be forced upon anyone. We are free to go as we please, and those who are determined to be independent and take their own way must just find it for themselves. No one can count upon getting God's guidance who does not seek it. This is the meaning of 'acknowledge Him.' It means 'take notice of Him,' consult Him, and obey His directions. Treat Him as you treat a guide. Ask His advice and direction before setting out. Be at pains to find out His meaning, and to understand

it clearly. If any particular path suggests itself to you as the right one, ask His leave, and wait for His consent before you set out in it. In a word, make it the constant business of your life to know God's will, and to do God's will when you know it, in each detail of each day. Those who thus acknowledge Him, He directs. He keeps their minds clear and their consciences quick, and they walk through life with firm steps.

And now, what will this mean in practice? What are 'the ways' in which we must acknowledge Him?

1. The course of life as a whole. It is well often to think of life thus as a unity, and ask where it is leading to. Some, who cry to God for guidance now and then in difficulties, never do this. Is it not strange that men should undertake the longest journey of all without Him? Our life is making for *some* point beyond the grave—

Into the silent land,  
Ah, who shall lead us thither?

God is to be acknowledged by surrendering to Him our whole life, to be guided wholly by Him.

2. In each particular enterprise and action we engage in, He is to be acknowledged. Thus only can the work of our hands be established upon us.

3. In what goes before our actions—the imaginations and desires, the plans and purposes, we must acknowledge Him. He who lets his heart and his thoughts go unguided by God on their own way, may call in vain to God for guidance when it comes to action.

4. In what comes after our actions—habits. When we have done a thing often, we get into the habit of doing it. All of us have some bad habits, and many who consult God as to particular actions still let their formed habits guide them each along its own line. But here, too, He must be acknowledged, and by His grace the strongest habit can be broken.

Stress must finally be laid on the word *all*. God will have our whole heart or He will have none of it. The mistake that is most common, and perhaps the most fatal mistake, is made by not realising this. There are some who seek God's guidance only when the way is difficult or dangerous; others who seek it only when they have time for thinking and meditating, as on a sickbed; and there are very many who now and then take a little short-cut of their own, though, in the main, they seek to

follow Him. But whenever we go out of His guidance we lose our bearings spiritually, and are liable to mistake the meaning of His spirit. Conscience tampered with becomes inaccurate, and the mind confused. The only safe course is to acknowledge Him in *all* our ways.

For us, God's guidance comes through Jesus Christ. He has trodden the perplexing pathway before us, and He guides those who trust Him. Be it ours to find His guidance, and 'patiently and with a holy indifferency wait His award.'

### The Saving Grace of Appreciation.

\*—

‘The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.’—  
MATT. xii. 42.

No writer of the present day has insisted so beautifully and so simply on the virtue of appreciation as R. L. Stevenson. His whole life and work, and especially his songs, show him with 'glorious morning face' going about the world, not to find fault with everything, but to notice the beauty and the worth. It would be well for us all to learn his lesson, concerning things human and divine as well. What we need is not so much to get new things to make life pleasant as to appreciate the things we have.

Our text presents us with one of the most picturesque of Old Testament scenes. It was a favourite theme of the Jews, and many quaint legends gathered round it.<sup>1</sup> The Arabs assign the name Balkis to this queen. Sheba, her land, seems to have been the Sabean kingdom of Yemen, in the extreme south of Arabia, at the lower end of the Red Sea. Hearing, perhaps, from the Phœnician ships, which visited her ports, of the grandeur and the wisdom of Solomon, she travelled north with costly gifts to Jerusalem. We can imagine the gay and brilliant scenes of those days in the Judean city, when foreign princes with their gorgeous trains came to wonder at the temple and the palace, and the streets blazed with the barbaric splendour of the East and South.

This visit brings into view a great national feature of Israel and a whole stretch of her inner history. In conservative pride of race the Jews

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*.

hated foreigners. Their belief in one God, which, to the spiritual, was a proclamation of universal blessing and brotherhood, was to the unspiritual a means of extravagant pride, presumption, and cruelty. Israel was proud of her God rather than true to Him—and there is a vast difference between these states of soul. This contemptuous attitude of Israel towards foreigners was vigorously opposed by the noblest of her prophets, who ‘gradually extended Israel’s home mission into a foreign mission.’ But before the prophets’ day precursors of their movement had appeared. A few solitary and picturesque figures of foreigners in whom good was found flit across the stage. Such were Naaman and the widow of Sarepta, and such was this queen. These are known to history as persons who *appreciated*. In the time of each of them, Israel was neglecting and undervaluing her own spiritual treasures, and the appreciation shown by these rebuked her.

The emphatic thing in the story of the text is the enormous distance travelled by the queen, for she lived at the bounds of the known world. It was at least a thousand miles of camel-journey, involving several weeks of very dreary travelling. And the question which is at once suggested is, ‘What was it that she travelled to gain?’ The answer is ‘wisdom,’ and we are reminded of those mediæval scholar-pilgrims who were once so famous in Europe and the East. Jewish tradition takes a low view of the kind of wisdom that she sought, but Scripture warrants us in taking a higher view. ‘Three things,’ says Edersheim, ‘are beyond question. She was attracted by the fame of Solomon’s *wisdom*; she viewed that wisdom in connexion with the *name of Jehovah*; and she came to *learn*.’

In the text, Jesus Christ contrasts this apprecia-

tive queen with His own unappreciative generation. Infinitely more worthy of men’s regard than Solomon, he received, in comparison, almost none. ‘Solomon was wise, but here is wisdom’—and yet he is ‘despised and rejected of men,’ and ‘when they see him there is no beauty that they should desire him.’

Yet, great as this contrast is, there is a striking similarity between the two cases. The Jewish legends show that what had impressed the Jews most in Solomon’s grandeur was its show, its curious and wonderful riddles, its reported magic; the queen was most impressed with its revelation of Jehovah. In Christ’s day the Jews still sought after signs in the same trivial spirit, and it was of Gentiles that He said more than once, ‘I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.’ This difference of spirit was, in Christ’s estimation, all-important. He longed to be appreciated for His own sake, as the revelation to men of the divine love and of the divine truth. To those who thus appreciated Him, whether the centurion or the disciple, the Syrophenician woman or the sinful Jewess, His heart went out in readiest response.

To-day our Christian lands, with their indifference to the divine love and truth, and their curiosity concerning every external of religious history and ritual and personage, are rebuked by every heathen and by every outcast whose heart melts under a sense of the love and truth he finds in Christ. And the lesson for each one is, that all other matters are unimportant; differences of race, birth, education, endowment, wealth, are of no importance at all. One thing is needful, and that is, to value Christ,—to value Him for the supply of our deepest needs; to appreciate in Him the power of God, and the truth of God, and the love of God.

## Recent Foreign Theology.

### Van Hoonacker on Israel’s Return from Exile.<sup>1</sup>

PROFESSOR VAN HOONACKER of Louvain is well known for his studies on the chronology and the

<sup>1</sup> *Nouvelles Études sur la Restauration Juive*. Par A. van Hoonacker. Paris, E. Leroux; Edinburgh and London, Williams & Norgate.

history of the period that followed the Exile in Babylon. With the late Dr. Kuenen he was engaged in controversy on this subject at the time of the Leyden professor’s death, and it now appears as if Dr. Kusters, who succeeded Kuenen in his chair, had fallen heir also to the controversies of his predecessor. A considerable sensation was caused by the appearance of Kusters’