

the words: 'The sun was silent, and the moon ceased, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies,' as a poetic way of saying that the dark morning was followed by a dull and gloomy day.

The only point which still requires reconciliation is the other phrase, 'and hastened not to go down about a whole day.' It is futile to say that *נָסַח* (to go down) simply means 'to come,' *i.e.* that the sun did not hasten to come out; for in relation to the sun, its invariable meaning is 'to go down.' It is thus used in x. 27. The word to which attention is to be directed is *נָסַח* (hasted). Its primary signification is 'to urge,' or 'press on.' And again, remembering that we are dealing with a poem, we would suggest that this is a natural and simple rhetorical figure to express the bright or fierce shining of the sun. There would be no appearance of the movement of the sun in the heavens if the day was dark and gloomy, as we have suggested. The latter part of ver. 13 would then mean, 'The sun did not shine brightly, or

press on in his strength as if in haste to go down, for about a whole day.'

This interpretation gives us a harmonious view of the whole poem. It makes the poem illustrate the history, and the history the poem. It avoids the insuperable exegetical, historical, and geographical objections to the old interpretation, and puts a more simple miracle in place of one which is startlingly unique. It preserves the main fact of importance that 'the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.' It holds closely by the principle of economy, which is so characteristic of all the miracles of God. It removes difficulties which have troubled many devout readers of the Bible, and takes from the hand of unbelievers one of their most common objections to the truth and reliability of the Word of God. But in this connexion it is, however, well to remember that no man's present character or future destiny will be determined by what he thinks of this miracle, but by what he thinks of Christ.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

JOHN xiv. 27.

'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'

EXPOSITION.

'Peace.'—The word is here a solemn farewell, just as in 20th it is a solemn greeting. To 'give peace' was a customary phrase of salutation. The Lord takes the common words and transforms them. 'God gave to Phinehas,' Philo writes in reference to Nu 25¹², 'the greatest blessing, even peace, a blessing which no man is able to afford.'—WESTCOTT.

'Peace I leave with you.'—If it be asked in what it consists, we may perhaps rightly distinguish its constituent parts as the peace of conscience, the peace of character, and the peace of trust. There is peace in a conscience relieved from guilt, reconciled to God, and restored to its rightful supremacy. There is peace in a character brought into order and harmony, in which the disquieting power of worldly and carnal lusts, of pride, of selfishness, of evil tempers and unworthy feelings, has given place to the reign of nobler principles and purer affections. Finally, there is peace in that trust and confidence in God, which casts all

care upon Him, simply relies upon His promises, leaves all things in His hand, and is sure that He does all things well. If these be elements of peace, each one of them is the gift of Christ; for from Him they all proceed, and in Him are found.—BERNARD.

'My peace.'—*My peace* implies the peace which belongs to Himself, is a characteristic of His own experience and a part of His own nature. So in Ph 4⁷ the 'peace of God' is that peace which is characteristic of the Divine Being. It was this peace which enabled Christ to stand unmoved and unperturbed in the court of Caiaphas and the hall of Pilate. It was the fulfilment of this promise which enabled the apostles to meet in like manner, unfearing and untroubled, the threats and persecutions of the authorities in Jerusalem immediately after the day of Pentecost; which gave Stephen serenity in the storm of stones; enabled Peter to sleep in chains; gave to Paul and Silas their songs in the night; kept Paul unmoved in the midst of the mob at Jerusalem, and in the peril of shipwreck.—ABBOTT.

'Not as the world giveth.'—Referring either to the manner in which the world gives peace, or to the kind of gifts it bestows. The peace of the world depends on circumstances, which may soon alter; which will certainly cease at death, and a peace which, even at the best, fails to reach and command the deepest springs of our nature. Men bequeath to their children what is meant as a mark of affection,

and to secure their comfort, but which too often becomes steps preparing with fatal facility for an unworthy life. The world cannot give peace, whatever else it gives, and any apparent peace is false; Christ gives peace which holds in all circumstances, and gives it whatever else He withholds.—REITH.

‘Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’—The last word is an admonition of no small importance, both to those who heard it then, and to us who read it now. It expresses the worst effect of the troubling of the heart, not the natural emotion of fear, but the cowardly yielding to it. It is the craven spirit which shrinks from duty, loses hope, abandons what it should hold fast, surrenders to the enemy, or deserts to his side. ‘Fear,’ says the Book of Wisdom, ‘is nothing else but a betraying of the succours which reason offereth’ (12¹⁷); and the fear here spoken of is nothing else but a betraying of the succours which are offered by grace. Only in this place in the New Testament does the verb occur; but the substantive is used by St. Paul in his farewell charge to Timothy: ‘God hath not given us the spirit of fearfulness, but of power’ (2 Ti 1⁷); and in the Apocalypse the adjective designates those who head the sad procession of the lost (21⁸). The adjective describes a character, but the verb is only a condition, which, as in St. Peter’s case, may be passing, but is sin at the time, and danger for the future.—BERNARD.

Our Lord’s Last Will and Testament.

1. It is the shortest Will that ever was made. It is the one word *Peace*. But ‘peace’ is the greatest word in our language. It is the greatest thing in the world. Love is not so great; because love is the means and this is the end. Love exists to produce peace. And when peace has come, it includes all love within it. Joy is not so great, though it is akin. A Greek said, ‘Joy be with you,’ when he came and when he went. A Hebrew said, ‘Peace be with you.’ And the Hebrew thought was deeper. For joy is emotional, fitful; peace is spiritual, eternal. The peace Christ left passes all understanding; that is never said of joy.

2. It is a legacy. It is left. ‘Peace I leave with you.’ This was why Jesus had to go away—that He might make peace through the blood of the Cross. The disciples felt that His going was their greatest trouble: He tells them it is the occasion of their deepest peace. It is a will. ‘Now where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of the testator.’ But here it is the death that furnishes the legacy. Peace I leave with you—the moment I have made it on the tree.

3. So the peace is first of all reconciliation with God. It is the peace of the forgiven.

‘Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven.’ Next it is the peace of moral victory. With the reconciliation comes the gift of the Spirit. And the gift of the Spirit means the victory over sin—the life set right and by faith kept right, the going on from strength to strength till we appear every one of us in Zion. It is the peace of Jesus Himself. ‘My peace I give unto you.’ And the peace of Jesus was of this double nature. First, it was the peace of communion with the Father (which is ours in reconciliation); and next, it was the peace of obedience. He did the Father’s will as made known by the Spirit, and He had peace.

4. And it is a gift. ‘My peace I give unto you.’ For it is He that has reconciled us to God; it is He that gives the daily victory over self; it is He that is ever near to bear the burden that we cast upon Him.

5. And now to recognize the gift, let us see that it is not the opposite of sorrow—that is joy. And it is not the opposite of toil—that is rest. While we are here there must be both toil and sorrow. But there ought to be no *conflict* within or without; and when conflict ceases that is peace. ‘Let the peace of God *rule* in your hearts.’

6. Whereupon comes the practical word: ‘Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’ He began the discourse with the words, ‘Let not your heart be troubled.’ In the interval He has shown them why they ought not to be troubled. So He repeats the word. But He adds another, ‘Neither let it be afraid.’ And the fear is the fear that betrays a trust. It looks beyond self to duty. It is yours to hold a position against the enemy, He says; yours to take it perhaps,—be not faint-hearted.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

I REMEMBER once standing by the side of a little Highland loch, on a calm autumn day, when all the winds were still, and every birch tree stood unmoved, and every twig was reflected on the steadfast mirror, into the depths of which Heaven’s own blue seemed to have found its way. That is what our hearts may be, if we let Christ put His guarding hand round them to keep the storm off, and have Him within us for our rest. But the man who does not trust Jesus is like the troubled sea which cannot rest, but goes moaning round half the world, homeless and hungry, rolling and heaving, monotonous, and yet changeable, salt and barren—the true emblem of every soul that has not listened to the merciful call, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’—A. MACLAREN.

How slow we are to trust Jesus, and trusting, to rest in Him. A small steam packet was crossing a stormy bay. Her engine suddenly stopped. For a little while the peril was great. An old lady rushed to the captain to ask whether there was any danger. 'Madame,' he replied, 'we must trust in God.' 'O dear,' she cried, '*has it come to that?*' A good many Christians are like that terrified lady. In times of peril they are willing to trust in everything—except God. He is their last resource. Yet no one but He can either give them peace, or keep them peaceful.—A. C. PRICE.

THERE are several things called peace which are by no means divine or Godlike peace. There is peace, for example, in the man who lives for and enjoys self, with no nobler aspiration goading him on to make him feel the rest of God; that is peace, but that is merely the peace of toil. There is rest on the surface of the caverned lake, which no wind can stir; but that is the peace of stagnation. There is peace amongst the stones which have fallen and rolled down the mountain's side, and lie there quietly at rest; but that is the peace of inanity. There is peace in the hearts of enemies who lie together, side by side, in the same trench of the battlefield, the animosities of their souls silenced at length, and their hands no longer clenched in deadly enmity against each other; but that is the peace of death. If our peace be but the peace of the sensualist satisfying pleasure, if it be but the peace of mental torpor and inaction, the peace of apathy, or the peace of the soul dead in trespasses and sins, we may whisper to ourselves, 'Peace, peace,' but there will be no peace; *there* is not the peace of unity, nor the peace of God, for the peace of God is the living peace of love.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

LET a man be as far-seeing, accommodating, politic, unscrupulous as may be, he cannot hope always to escape disaster, for this peace is as uncertain as the lovely Mediterranean. One day you look out through the motionless foliage on a still expanse of blue, and next morning the orange blossom is strewn upon the ground, and the spray is dashing on your garden wall. '*As the world giveth.*'—J. WATSON.

THE peace of Christ was the fruit of combined *toil* and *trust*; in the one case diffusing itself from the centre of His active life, in the other from that of His passive emotions; enabling Him in the one case to *do things* tranquilly, in the other to *see things* tranquilly.—J. MARTINEAU.

IF the world called Jesus Devil and Samaritan, God said first, 'My beloved Son,' and if He was arrested as if He were a thief, the angels of God waited on Him. The world

had denied Him ease: His life was troubled; God gave Him peace: His heart was not troubled, neither was it afraid. If we must have thorns somewhere, let us wear them on the brow rather than in the heart.—J. WATSON.

A WHILE ago a fearful blizzard, a storm of fine snow and fierce wind visited Nebraska. A country schoolhouse stood right in the blizzard's track. A young girl in her teens, Minnie Freeman by name, was teaching in that schoolhouse. About three o'clock in the afternoon the blizzard struck the school, tore the door from its hinges, tore off the roof, and left the little ones therein exposed to the elements. To remain there was certain death. To reach the nearest house was hazardous in the extreme. The plucky teacher determined to attempt it, but not alone. She would save the children too if she could. She took a ball of strong twine, and with it tied all the little ones together, three abreast, except the youngest one, whom she took in her arms. She then tied the end of that cord of love round her own body, and cheering the children with words of encouragement, she faced the storm, and brought them all in safety to a farmhouse, three-quarters of a mile away.—A. C. PRICE.

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