÷Jacob

by

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÷Chapter 1. JACOB BORN AND YOUNG.

Gen 25:30-34

If scripture speaks briefly of Isaac, it has much to say of Jacob, as it had not a little of Abraham. Yet the difference between the divine accounts of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is marked and instructive. The grandfather was pre-eminently a man of faith, in whom God's call was conspicuous, head of a chosen race, as Adam of mankind. Isaac was distinctively the son of Sarah the freewoman; "in Isaac shall thy seed be called," Abraham's child and heir. In wandering Jacob, supplanter of Esau yet wrestler of God, His merciful purposes for the earthly people appear in their rich and striking variety. Jacob gives occasion to the exercise of God's sovereignty as to the twin children of Isaac and Rebekah. For they being not yet born, nor having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him that calls, it was said to their mother, The elder shall serve the younger. It had been shown before in casting out the bondwoman and her son; but so it was now far more emphatically in Jacob chosen, not Esau. No flesh shall glory; in Jehovah certainly, as it ought to be. Is man only to think and talk of *his* rights? Sinful man! Has God alone no rights? Is He to be a mere registrar of man's wrongs? Ah! his wrongs, not rights: this is the truth, as no believer should forget from the dawn of a vital work in his soul.

Without dwelling long, we may notice the youth of Isaac's sons, already traced in the sketch given of their father. Esau did not become a sojourner in the land of promise; but, being at home there and without a heavenly hope, he made the early career of Nimrod his own, if he never thought of him. From the outset he was as unlike Abraham as one of the family line could be. His love of excitement and of reckless adventure made him despise the parental circle, and the monotonous duty of caring for the herds and the flocks. Others might look for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God; but it had not the least place in Esau's heart. For him the present life was all, and the chase in particular as giving scope to courage and address in overcoming difficulties and gaining personal distinction. Therefore was he a cunning hunter, a man of the field; whereas Jacob was a homely or quiet man, dwelling in tents, with warm domestic affections; and he valued too the link with God, though with a heart as yet little if at all cleansed by faith. So the history appears to intimate for many a day.

But those who seek their pleasures without a thought of God like Esau do not find their own path free from the world's sorrows. And his extremity became Jacob's opportunity. The cunning hunter came in from the field without his venison, hungry and faint; and the keen edge of appetite, so whetted yet foiled, made him the more sensitive to the dish of red lentils which Jacob had cooked. And so he, who at other times would have been too proud to ask a favour of his brother, whom he heartily despised as a milksop, stoops to beg: "Feed me, I pray thee, with the red — the red there, for I am faint." Quick as thought, without prayer to God, but full of that which his mind at least prized, Jacob makes his bargain: "Sell me now (or, first) thy birth-right." Truly it was the worm Jacob," and different indeed from the Israel" of a later day. But scripture tells the truth; and the two men were seen as they really were. "Behold," said Esau, "I am going to die; and of what use can the birth-right be to me?" Why so impatient? Could he not hold out a quarter of an hour? The mother's tent was near; could he not wait long enough to ask of those who had never refused his cry of need — never put him off with a stone or a serpent?

No; he must have the tempting food on the instant. In his impetuous haste and self-will it seemed death to wait a few moments longer. Alas! Jacob took advantage of it; and brought in God, whom he himself was selfishly slighting, to bind Esau who had no fear of Him whatever: "Swear to me first." And he did swear to sell his birth-right to Jacob. How fleshly the act on both sides! Instead of securing Jacob in the sight of God, it was part of those evil days on which he had to look back with shame and sorrow when grace really governed his soul. And it could do no more than widen the gulf between the brothers, rankling as it might, and not unnaturally, in his heart who was drawn into the oath by the pressure of a passing need. So Jacob gave his bread and dish of lentils; and Esau "eat and drank, and rose up, and went his way" in the graphic terms of the history, with the solemn comment: "so Esau despised his birth-right." What great moral principles are for us in these apparently so simple tales of domestic life in early days! Let us not, like unbelievers, leave God out of the account, none can, save to his irreparable loss.

÷Chapter 2. JACOB DECEIVING ISAAC.

Genesis 27.

This is a cup to the brim full of sin and shame for all concerned. Isaac in comparison seems an object of compassion, though here really profane and without the fear of God; so were inexcusable not only Isaac, but Rebecca and Jacob. In speaking of his father we have sufficiently looked at the mother. It remains to say a little more of the one immediately before us.

Oh, the witness to what a saint may be allowed to stoop! What a witness also to that which God is in His long-suffering and grace! If He were not the Eternal who changes not, assuredly Jacob must have been consumed with his sons, as the last of the O.T. prophets tells us. Nevertheless as His moral government dealt with them, so too we may read in Jacob's history as God gives it in His holy word. The beginning was as wretched as could be conceived in either case; but Genesis lets us see in large measure the brightness which divine mercy shed on Jacob's close. Far different was it with Isaac, who disappears from view long before his departure; nor was there anything to distinguish the later years of Abraham's life comparable with Jacob a-dying. Then those eyes, which in youth were too keen for "his own things," were opened to see clearly the future of his sons to, and at, the end of days. Of a truth no prophecy comes of its own interpretation; for no prophecy was ever brought by man's will, but men spoke from God, borne along by the Holy Spirit, Who rests not short of His glorious purpose for Christ in the latter day.

But in this evil day what have we not to confess? What does not God recall in scripture for our admonition and warning? Humbling it is, but is it not truly good and profitable? Is it not then made evident, that He does not find in us what suits Him, but in love produces it where was a blank and worse? God alone gives the victory through faith; whilst every fault on our part is noticed, and fully, under the chastening of His moral government. Is not this as it should and must be, God being what He is, and man also? "He that hasteth with his feet sinneth." No flesh shall glory before him; he that glorieth, let him glory in Jehovah. Who but He could have said by Isaiah (Isa 41:13-14), Fear not, I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel: I will help thee, saith Jehovah, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. We can find no solid ground of rest but in what He is to us, not in what we are for Him. All shall be beaten small who in their pride of heart refuse to believe, and who trust in themselves that they are righteous. Only those who have Him for righteousness shall rejoice and glory in Him.

Hence it is that the Spirit refrains not from laying the scene before us in all its sad ignominy, where the righteous broke down utterly, because not one of them was then walking by faith but by sight; and he who had no faith appeals to our natural feelings as the injured party. And verily he, Esau, had his reward; for of the fatness of the earth was his dwelling, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by his sword he lived, though he served his brother; and the time came when, breaking loose, he broke that yoke from off his neck. What did he care for "the promises?" What was the covenant to him who lived only to gratify himself and his lusts?

Badly as Jacob behaved under his mother's crooked advice, doing evil that good might come, he really valued what the Almighty did and pledged in words that could not lie; but so much the greater was the sin, which in son as in mother distrusted Him in the face of Isaac's unworthy effort to indulge his favourite against the purpose of the, Lord. But so it was. "There are many devices in a man's heart; but the counsel of Jehovah shall stand." Flesh wrought its dark way all round. God was forgotten. Deceit prevailed; but the word of our God abides for ever. He who had no faith received none of the everlasting portion of grace; all who had done dishonour to God and their faith reaped sorrow from their fleshly measures. The mother parted soon after from her darling, never more to see him; and he who turned from the Lord to follow her devices became long an exile, cheated by his father-in-law as he had cheated his father, and put to many a shame by his own children.

But God was good as He is holy. Therefore because of sin Jacob had to learn all in suffering and self-judgment. Far better to have learnt it in His presence, which would have preserved him from exile even when pressed urgently by a fond mother. For conscience speaks to one's own soul, and ever refers to God, whose relationship, being nearest and most authoritative, ought not to be gainsaid or thrust aside even for her that bore him. In this case indeed she, a pious woman, by her ardour in a cunning enterprise, betrayed her self-will in boldly offering to take on herself instead of a blessing Jacob's curse, if so it should be through his father's possible discovery of the fraud (vers. 12, 13). But her persistence overruled or at least silenced his fears; and encouraged him to dare a no less impiety, as we read in vers. 20, 21. So candid is scripture, unveiling the desperate wickedness of which the heart is capable in saints left to themselves, or at least leaving God's presence to achieve God's promise in their own strength and wisdom. We shall see in the sequel what conflict and humiliation befell Jacob, as the necessary discipline to which God subjected him in order that the flesh should be put down, and the saint restored to the ways of holiness from such shameless tampering with evil.

÷Chapter 3. JACOB BLESSED AND SENT TO PADAN-ARAM.

Gen 28:1-9.

After the humbling scene in which Isaac and Rebekah with Jacob, to say nothing of Esau, played so unworthy parts, it is refreshing here to read of Isaac's pious care over Jacob; and all the more, that grace made use of Rebekah to recall the spirit of her husband to faithful and righteous ways about their son called to blessing (Gen 27:46).

And Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-Aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. And God Almighty [EI-Shaddai] bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a company of peoples. And may he give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest possess the land of thy sojournings, which God gave to Abraham. And Isaac sent away Jacob; and he went to Padan-Aram, to Laban Son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, mother of Jacob and Esau. Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan-Aram, to take him a wife thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; and [that] Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-Aram. And Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father. And Esau went to Ishmael, and took, unto the wives which he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife" (vers. 1-9).

We may notice this peculiarity in the blessing here pronounced on Jacob by his father that a "charge" (ver. 1) accompanied it. Jacob must not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. For they were accursed in Jehovah's eyes, though the execution in any measure tarries till the cup of the Amorites was full. For the wanderer Jacob there was to be as distinct a refusal of alliance with the Canaanite as for Isaac. Only the latter was in the strictest way forbidden to go out of the land (Gen 24:6; Gen 24:8), and the bride must be fetched thither: whereas the former goes in quest of a wife to the house of his mother's father (2). Thus are Jacob's earthly place and relations made no less evident than Isaac's heavenly ones. As the prophet Hosea puts it, Jacob fled into the field of Aram, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept [sheep]. So God decided for him in righteous government. Isaac's history is the type of sovereign grace calling a bride to the Heir of all things in heavenly places.

But it is also to be remarked in verse 3 that Isaac says, "God Almighty bless thee," and in verse 4, "And may he give thee the blessing of Abraham." But it is distinctly limited to a "multitude of peoples," and to his inheriting, he and his seed with him, "the land of his sojournings which God gave to Abraham." Yet we never hear that God appeared to Isaac in that character of revelation, as He did to Abraham very expressly in Gen 17:1; and it is even contrasted with the name of Jehovah made known to Moses in Exo 6:3 as the covenant name thenceforth for the children of Israel. But Isaac had it not directly like Abraham and Jacob.

Another trait of distinction is of much interest, to which Gal 3:16 directs attention. "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed." And the apostle reasons on the one Seed which is Christ, as contrasted with the numerous seed referring to Israel. So we read in Gen 12:3 of it to Abraham, and confirmed to Isaac in Gen 22:18, though the countless earthly seed had been just mentioned in 17. This however is absent from Isaac's blessing on Jacob.

Scripture tells us in vers. 6-9 of Esau's imitating his brother as nearly as he could in appearance, because his Canaanite wives displeased his father. But God was not in his thoughts; and his imitation fell miserably short. For in addition to the daughters of Heth he took a daughter of Ishmael to wife, the bondmaid's offspring cast out from Abraham's house. There was no faith, but a natural and ineffectual effort after better ways. Apart from faith it is impossible to please God; for he that approaches Him must believe that He is, and becomes a rewarder of those that seek Him out. This was true of Jacob, in no way of Esau.

÷Chapter 4. JACOB AT BETHEL.

Gen 28:10-22.

This scene is remarkably characteristic of the outcast from his father's house, but of God's care over the destined progenitor of His earthly people. Fathers and Puritans have alike missed their way; for, not seeing the grand place reserved for Israel in the latter day and Messiah's millennial Kingdom, they turn all blessed persons and things to the church's aggrandisement, and thus deny at the end to God's ancient people their restored and enhanced dignity here below. This by necessary consequence lowers the Christian and the body of Christ to an earthly place, however favoured and exalted. It is to efface the true future; while it balefully reacts on the present also, enfeebling if not blotting out His glory on high and our proper heavenly privileges in the Spirit.

"And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted on the place, and lodged there, because the sun was set. And he took of the stones of the place, and made his pillows, and lay down in that place. And he dreamed, and, behold, a ladder set up on earth, and its top reached to the heavens. And, behold, angels of God ascended and descended upon it. And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, God of Abraham thy father, and God of Isaac: the land on which thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt break forth to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I [am] with thee, and will keep thee in all [places] whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee till I have done that of which I have spoken to thee. And Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I knew [it] not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful [is] this place! this [is] none other but God's house, and this the gate of the heavens. And Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he made his pillows, and set it [for] a pillar and poured oil upon its top. And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city was Luz at first. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and keep me on this road that I go, and give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, and I come again in peace to my father's house, then shall Jehovah be for God to me. And this stone which I have set [for] a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (vers. 10-22).

The place on which Jacob lighted was to be notable for the chequered fortunes of Israel; it had no bearing typically on the church. Jehovah made Bethel a pledge of assured mercy to Jacob when utterly forlorn, whatever the king raised up to be a scourge to the people might pervert it to in honour of a strange and rival god. There tarried Jacob all night, with nothing but the stones which he put for his pillows. But he dreamed, and saw set up on earth a ladder, whose top reached to the heavens; and Jehovah stood above it, declaring Himself Jehovah, God of Abraham his father, and God of Isaac, with the promise of the land, whereon he lay so desolately, to him and to his seed; and the seed to be as the dust of the earth (not a word about the stars of the sky), which should break forth on every side to the blessing of all the families of the earth in Jacob and his seed. Whatever the sad and lonely beginning, this should be the glorious end.

All is prophetic and for the earth, a dream from and of God, not such speech and open vision as Abraham had enjoyed, unless when on one occasion of deep sleep a horror of a great darkness fell upon him, when he too learnt the power of death in order to establish covenant security for the earthly seed, whatever came meanwhile, and the land was strictly defined and delivered from its usurpers, as the people had been from their oppressors. Isaac had only Jehovah appearing to him whether by day or by night to bless him in Canaan, and multiply his seed as stars of the heavens, and set him above fear. Jacob, however guaranteed by the striking sight of the ladder from earth (where he lay) to Jehovah at the top in the heavens, was afraid, and with angels of God ascending and descending on the ladder could only say, How dreadful this place! none other this but the gate of the heavens! Yet had Jehovah promised to keep him in all places whither he went (and which of the patriarchs such a wanderer?), and never to leave him till He had done all of which He had spoken to him. Could words more explicitly portray the Jewish portion, or stand in more marked contrast with the peace, liberty, and heavenly access of the Christian, while suffering With joy here below like Christ?

Yet the closing verses which. give us Jacob's acts and words add still weightier confirmation. For he at once set up his stone pillow for a pillar and anointed it, and called the name of the place Bethel, and vowed the first recorded vow, strikingly different from Isaac or Abraham. Therein he rises not above providential care, and the supply of present wants, yet God with him (for the root of the matter was there as his first thought), so that he should come to his father's house in peace. Jehovah should be to him for God, and this stone pillar His house, and of all He should give him he would Surely give the tenth to Him. It is, indeed, not Christians blessing the God and Father of our Lord, as from the first blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. How Jacob's vow differs from Abraham in Genesis 14 refusing to be made rich by aliens and giving unasked tithes. of all to Melchizedek, priest of the most High God, possessor of heavens and earth!

÷Chapter 5. JACOB MEETS RACHEL AT HARAN.

Gen 29:1-14.

Jacob, strengthened by his dream, pursues his journey to the land of his kindred. The first phrase is an uncommon one; the nearest to it is used of the priests in quitting the channel of the Jordan for Canaan (Jos 4:18), which hardly confirms the alacrity ascribed to it here.

"And Jacob went on his journey (lifted up his feet), and came into the land of the sons of the east. And he looked, and, behold, a well in the fields, and, behold there, three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks, and the stone on the well's mouth was great. And when all the flocks were gathered there, they rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered the sheep, and put again the stone on the well's mouth in its place. And Jacob said to them, My brethren, whence [be] ye? And they said, Of Haran [are] we. And he said to them, Know ye Laban son of Nahor? And they said, We do know [him]. And he said to them, [Is it] well (peace) with him? And they said, Well; and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep. And he said, Behold, [it is] yet high (great) day; [it is] not time that the cattle Should be gathered together: water the sheep, and go, feed [them]. And they said, We cannot till all the flocks be gathered together, and they roll the stone from the well's mouth: then we water the sheep. While he was still speaking to them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she kept them. And it came to pass when Jacob saw Rachel daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he [was] her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son; and she ran and told her father. And it came to pass when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house; and he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, Thou [art] indeed my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him a month of days" (Gen 29:1-14).

How strange that pious eyes of old and to our day should see in Jacob's foregoing journey and arrival in Haran a type of Jesus, Son of God and Heir of all things, despised and rejected of men, Jesus leaving heaven's glory to become a wanderer in the world, to accomplish redemption, and to espouse the church to Himself! Here evidently it rather typifies a contrast with Isaac, only son of his father, the dead and risen bridegroom of her that was fetched by Eliezer's guidance, the bride that must pass through the desert to be His bride in the heavenlies. Here it is one that leaves the land of promise after the saddest failure, but not without blessings in grace, with Jehovah assuring him in the dark night of His care, and not to leave him till He do so with His hand what His mouth had spoken. Jacob does not rise above the house of God on earth, the gate of heaven but not glory on high; and his vow, and anointed pillar, and tithe, and hopes, are all in unison with Israel, yet a prince with God here below. He is a type at most of the earthly side of the Lord; which tradition and theology, not discerning, have lowered so as to narrow the truth. These, seeing only the church position, have reduced the Lord's relationship accordingly, and appropriated Israel's place to the loss of the Christian's, as well as to the denial of the predicted blessings of the Jewish people as the head of the nations on earth under His coming reign.

Jacob is characteristically here under God's providential care, even when we hear only of the shepherds of Haran; and Rachel appears and Laban follows. It is His sure but unseen and unnamed direction. Yet we may remark the difference from Eliezer's distinct prayer of faith and immediate worship in Genesis 24, also from God's prompt answer, and from the bride's ready response and journey to join him whom unseen she trusted, and for whom she forsook all her existing ties of nature.

Here it is a touching scene, and the quick emotional outburst of Jacob's nature is in keeping, and even Laban's. But the deep communion with God, when it is the type of calling the bride for heaven, and the entire absorption of heart in the risen bridegroom's glory, are as wanting here as they are indelibly apparent in the unique episode of Isaac and Rebekah.

÷Chapter 6. THE MARRIAGES OF JACOB.

Gen 29:15-30.

It is well to bear in mind that Jacob, however vigorous, was no longer a young man, being seventy-seven when he arrived in Haran. There he must bow to the divine discipline which had already forced him to leave his father's house, and the late unhappy influence of his mother. So it is with each of God's children. Grace is sovereign in calling even the most untoward; but they pass under a moral government which takes notice of every fault, that they may become partakers of His holiness. Compare John 15, Heb 12:5-11, and 1Pe 1:15-16.

"And Laban said to Jacob, Because thou [art] my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what [shall be] thy wages? And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder [was] Leah (Weariness), and the name of the younger [was] Rachel (Ewe). And the eyes of Leah:[were] tender; but Rachel was beautiful of form and beautiful of countenance. And Jacob loved Rachel, and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy youngest daughter. And Laban said, Better [that] I give her to thee than [that] I should give her to another man: abide with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they were in his eyes a few days, for his love to her. And Jacob said to Laban, Give [me] my wife for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in to her. And Laban gave to her Zilpah his maid-servant [for] maid-servant to Leah his daughter. And it came to pass in the morning that, behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, What [is] this thou hast done to me? Have I not served with thee for Rachel? Why then hast thou deceived me? And Laban said, It is not so done in our place, to give the younger before the first-born. Fulfil the week of this one; and we will give thee the other also for the service that thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled the week; and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife. And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his maid-servant for her maid-servant. And he went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years" (vers. 15-30).

It is no small contrast to remember Isaac the heir, the son abiding in his father's house, and the honoured servant Eliezer sent to represent him and his father, with suited equipage and costly gifts for the bride. Here the outcast wanderer has nothing to recommend him but his relationship and his service. Nor was Laban slow to discern the value of so capable a man for interests dearer to him than all other considerations. So the bargain was soon struck, and the warm offer of Jacob instantly accepted. But when the full time of service for his bride arrived, the crafty uncle, under all his show of the wedding-feast to Jacob's honour, felt no scruple in the cruel deceit of substituting Leah for Rachel, the object of his heart from the first.

Then followed the humiliating temptation of the younger daughter offered on like conditions of long service, which to Jacob seemed but a few days, for his love to her. But we must not measure this case any more than others in Old Testament times by the light which the Saviour cast on marriage as on everything else. Yet it is refreshing to notice what He could draw from what was instituted at the beginning, before sin entered to throw into confusion the ways of God, by those manifold lusts of the flesh which war against the soul.

Here it was Jehovah dealing with Jacob that he might judge himself, and learn in his own experience the hatefulness of yielding to deceit, even if it were to gain the birth-right or the blessing over a profane brother, who cared only for himself and never had God as a living object before his soul. Such experience is made profitable to a weak or careless soul. One is thus habituated to the reality of having to do with God in the little things of life, as men are apt to count, as well as in the greatest. What goodness on His part to occupy Himself with every detail to teach us what a simpler faith had learnt in the happier and holier light of His presence. And scripture with divine largeness has room for all. If we have an Abraham comparatively firm and faithful, and an Isaac sheltered and with abundant favour in his weakness, we have a Jacob with his chequered life and faulty ways, yet chastened, kept, and blessed of God after a strikingly instructive sort.

÷Chapter 7. LEAH AND HER FOUR SONS.

Gen 29:31-35.

The righteous government of Jehovah is clearly seen here also. Jacob was grossly wronged by Laban in what must deeply touch a man's heart, and Leah was beyond doubt a consenting party to the cheating breach of the marriage compact as to Rachel. She might and ought to have told Jacob the unworthy trick her father was playing by her means. But God would have His servant Jacob learn more deeply in his own wounded affections the vileness of self-seeking deceit; and hence He permitted what He would use for chastening and good in the end.

"And when Jehovah saw that Leah [was] hated, he opened her womb; but Rachel [was] barren. And Leah conceived, and bore a son, and called his name Reuben (See! a son); for she said, Because Jehovah hath looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me. And she again conceived, and bore a son, and said, Because Jehovah hath heard that I [am] hated, he hath therefore given me this one also; and she called his name Simeon (Hearing). And she again conceived, and bore a son, and said, Now this time will my husband be united to me, for I have borne him three sons; therefore was his name called Levi (United). And she again conceived, and bore a son, and said, This time will I praise Jehovah; therefore she called his name Judah (Praise). And she ceased from bearing" (vers. 31-35).

It will be observed that it is not Elohim here, but Jehovah, God in special relationship and moral dealing. He looked on the sorrowful and despised wife, and gave not to Rachel but to Leah, the comparatively "hated," the consolation of a son. Rachel happy in her husband's love was left barren! We can notice how the firstborn loomed in the mother's eyes, and how much she counted on the call to Jacob's heart. But Jacob was slow to forget the wrong done him about Rachel, or to feel his own wrong to Leah. Nor was it only that Jehovah looked tenderly on her aggrieved spirit, but she acknowledged Jehovah's compassion in the matter. Jehovah, said she, hath looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me. This seems premature: we hear as yet not a sound of it on his part.

Again however she has a son, and says, Because Jehovah hath heard that I am hated, He hath therefore given me this one also. The even stronger expression of her husband's alienation does not weaken but renew her sense of the favour Jehovah was showing her; and as with Reuben, so now the naming of her second son bespeaks it: Jehovah heard as well as saw. We do not learn of any relaxation on the offended man's part: he had his Rachel. And again she bore him a third son, and said, Now this time will my husband be united to me; for I have borne him three sons. Therefore was his name called Levi. It is not as before that she called it. All seems more vague and in a lower key here; and Jehovah is not named. But He never fails; and again she bore a son, and said, Now this time will I praise Jehovah; therefore she called his name Judah. Never do we hear of her soul rising so high; the sorrow-stricken woman breaks forth into praise of Jehovah; and her fourth son bears it in the name she gave him that day. Yes, of Judah came according to flesh the Christ, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. How much His grace rises above our praise!

There can hardly be a plainer warning of the danger to which even pious men are exposed in treating of types than that of the excellent Dr. J. Lightfoot with his vast Rabbinical learning. His knowledge of divine truth was too slender to warrant it. Like others in that day and in almost every other, he was superficial in gospel truth, ignored the Spirit's presence and the church's union with Christ on high, and His coming again to consummate God's counsels for heaven, earth, and all creation, being also utterly wrong as to the restoration of Israel in that consummation. Hence he held that "Leah and Rachel are figures of the two churches; the church of the Jews under the law, and the church of the Gentiles under the gospel: the younger the more beautiful, and more in the thoughts of Christ, when he came in the form of a servant; but the other, like Leah, first embraced and taken to wife."\*

\*Lightfoot's Works, ii. 98, 1822.

A deeper acquaintance with scripture would have avoided such mistakes. For Rachel represents Israel, Messiah's first object of love on earth. But this fails by no fault on His part. And He has Leah, who thus represents the intervening call of the Gentiles during Jacob's servant state and mighty sorrows, when "more are the children of the desolate than of the married wife, saith Jehovah" (Isa 54:4, cf. Galatians 4). In due time the barren one bears Joseph who typifies Christ rejected and exalted, but making Himself known to His brethren at last; and also Benjamin, the only one born in the land, son of his mother's sorrow but of his father's right-hand, bringing millennial power before us, as Joseph does its blessing.

÷Chapter 8. THE WIVES AND THEIR MAIDS.

Gen 30:1-13.

Though revelation of and from God is the essential difference of scripture from all other writings, there is much more of the utmost value. We have man as he is, as nowhere else: the truth is told us that we may know ourselves as well as God. Hence the interest and importance of inspired light in what the proud selfishness of man's mind is prone to despise as mere domestic jars. To the believer they not only are full of salutary instruction but suggest the witness of divine concern and compassion, in what must all be manifested before His holy eyes to Whom we shall give account of the things done in the body whether good or evil, yea, of the hidden things of darkness and the counsels of hearts. Assuredly no flesh shall glory; and it is well and wise to learn it now, that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

"And when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and she said to Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel; and he said, [Am] I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? And she said, Behold, my maid Bilhah; go in to her, that she may bear on my knees, and I may also be built up by her. And she gave him Bilhah her bondmaid as wife; and Jacob went in to her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and also heard my voice, and given me a son: therefore she called his name Dan (Judge). And Bilhah Rachel's bondmaid again conceived and bore Jacob a second son. And Rachel said, Wrestlings of God have I wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed; and she called his name Naphtali (my Wrestling). When Leah saw that she had ceased to bear, she took Zilpah her bondmaid, and gave her to Jacob as wife. And Zilpah Leah's bondmaid bore Jacob a son. And Leah said, What fortune! and she called his name Gad (Fortune). And Zilpah Leah's bondmaid bore Jacob a second son. And Leah said, With my happiness; for the daughters will call me happy! and she called his name Asher (Happy)" (Gen 30:1-13).

One understands too well, too sadly, why Rachel should view her own childlessness and her sister rich in children with chagrin. Self wrought and blinded her to her sister's lack of Jacob's heart of which she had the monopoly. It was envy, that base feeling which cannot endure another, even a sister's, having what she had not; and this broke out in unreasonable and impious repining to her husband, as if her barrenness were his fault. No wonder that his anger resented her unworthy state in his rejoinder, Am I in God's stead Who has withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? But he yielded to her proposal, and takes Bilhah that she might obtain children by her maid. Had not honoured Sarah done the like? Yes, but through Ishmael its fruit did it not issue in the expulsion of both Hagar and her son? Was this encouraging? How different from Hannah the sorrowful under Peninnah's provocations, or even the high-priest's misjudgment! She broke out into no unseemly murmurs against her husband, but wept and prayed and vowed to Jehovah, and was heard of the God of Israel.

It is the striking difference of the N.T. from the Old that perfection was only established when God spoke, and wrought also, in the Son. The law made nothing perfect, though a divine witness to what was coming and the just measure of human righteousness on earth. And the Lord was able to vindicate on Jehovah's part that, if Moses in view of the people's hardheartedness allowed them even to put away their wives, from the beginning it was not thus. Male and female made He them. Christ alone represented God adequately, and as Son the Father; and this in man, God and man in one Person. This is all to God the Father's glory.

But of old God permitted what was far from His mind, as we see here, till He makes all things new. Jacob was not Jesus, nor was any other He, though a man of faith. Jesus is Himself, not a man only, though this He was 'completely and perfectly, but true God no less than the Father.

The names Rachel gave the sons of Bilhah expressed the state of her soul, and toward her sister. Dan and Naphtali do not tell us of grace, but of satisfaction in gaining points of strife on her own part. Leah was drawn into the snare and through Zilpah would equal that advantage. And the names she gave Zilpah's sons, Gad and Asher, though not reflecting the contention which governed Rachel's spirit, by no means rose to the level of faith she had shown in naming her own sons. But it is the prerogative of God, while every wrong has its effect among men and its judgment before Himself, to cause all things to work together for good to them that love Him, the called according to purpose. He at least is good and does good, whatever man has to mourn.

÷Chapter 9. LEAH AND RACHEL AGAIN.

Gen 30:14-24.

There is a twofold lesson in these divine sketches, which eludes the erudite unbelief which sits in judgment only to despise, and remains in really self-satisfied ignorance. For they present, to the life, the humbling history of the ancestor of a people destined to be God's possession for the earth by His own choice, spite of these petty ways. They also let us into the secret of that grace in God which rose above all that was immeasurably detestable to His nature in light and love, and even looked on to Him who was to come of this very family, the Christ that is over all, God blessed for ever, as truly God as His Father. It may well be doubted if such glorious hopes were then before the two wives, as the pious Bishop Patrick credits them with; but we are assured that such halo as this did faith give to many a Hebrew matron, grounded on the promises to their fathers, and stretching on to Him who should appear to make them all good. Besides, was there not food for reflection in that Moses was inspired to write these things down imperishably for their children throughout ages and generations, too sorrowfully like those from whom they sprang? And for us who come in on their downfall and before their restoration, for us who inherit better blessings as joint-heirs with. Him who is glorified in heaven, and is coming to take us into the same glory on high, is there not abundant profit for our souls? The flesh never changes to spirit: in it good does not dwell. If we live, it is by the faith of the Son of God: and Christ it is, not the old self dead to God, that lives in each Christian.

"And Reuben went out in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field; and he brought them to his mother Leah. And Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes. And she said to her, Is it little that thou hast taken my husband, that thou wilt take my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee tonight for thy son's mandrakes. And when Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, Thou must come in to me, for indeed I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night. And God hearkened to Leah; and she bore Jacob a fifth son. And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I gave my bondmaid to my husband; and she called his name Issachar (There is hire). And Leah again conceived, and bore Jacob a sixth son; and Leah said, God hath endowed me with a good dowry: this time will my husband dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons. And she called his name Zebulun (Dwelling). Afterward she bore a daughter and called her name Dinah (Judged). And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived and bore a son, and said, God hath taken away my reproach. And she called his name Joseph (He will add); and said, Jehovah will add to me another son" (vers. 14-24).

No veil is cast over their deplorable unbelief and mean jealousy, no excuse for their superstitious trust in the efficacy of love-apples, just like other Syrian women given only to the vanities of the heathen. It is clear that Rachel profited nothing by the child Reuben's discovery; but that God pitied Leah who sought to share her husband's affection, and bore him now a fifth son and a sixth, besides a daughter. But how strangely low Leah's state in regarding Issachar as her hire from God, because she gave her bondmaid to Jacob; and in calling Zebulun from her fond hope that her husband's love would prove abiding! Nor did the daughter's name indicate any higher view, being akin to that of Dan.

Rachel at length, as we read here, becomes the occasion of refreshment for the heart in the considerate tenderness of God's ways; Who, after her long humiliation because of her unworthy self-seeking, was pleased to pity her and give her a son so earnestly desired. Then she Paid, God hath taken away my reproach; for notwithstanding her lofty bearing she was sensible that she was under chastisement. The name she gave her firstborn is striking; for Joseph means He will add. As she said, Jehovah will add to me another. Her faith saw in Joseph the promise of Benjamin. Never before had she reached this level of expectation. For the mouth tells the secret, or certainly the abundance, of the heart. God — Jehovah — was now before her. Yet how little she knew that Benjamin would be Benoni, of his father's right hand, of his mother's sorrow; for his birth must prove her death. How much better to confide in unfailing love and wisdom than to set the heart on any object here below!

When Messiah takes up repentant Israel for everlasting joy and blessing under the new covenant in. the last days, how will not the children ponder these early annals of their progenitors, so long reproduced in their own history of painful failure under the law! How sweet to their hearts to recognise that their blessing and glory, under Him whom alas! they long despised blindly, are all and only of divine mercy!

÷Chapter 10. JACOB AND LABAN.

Gen 30:25-43.

We need not dwell on the incident that next claims our notice. As the marriage life of Isaac and Rebekah was very different from that of Jacob with his wives and their maids, so does the bearing of Abram toward Lot present a strongly marked contrast with that of Jacob and Laban. We are now in a far more cloudy atmosphere, though in the main Jacob was a faithful servant, and Laban deceitful and selfish. But God is not mocked, even in the day when evil is allowed to work its dark way till judgment return to righteousness.

"And it came to pass when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, Send me away, that I may go to mine own place and to my country. Give me [my] wives for whom I have served thee, and my children, that I may go away, for thou knowest my service which I have served thee. And Laban said to him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes: I have discovered that Jehovah hath blessed me for thy sake. And he said, Appoint me thy hire, and I will give it. And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and what thy cattle hath become with me. For it was little thou hadst before I came, and it hath increased into a multitude; and Jehovah hath blessed thee as I turned [lit. at my feet]; and now how shall I also provide for mine own house? And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shall not give me aught. If thou doest this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock. I will pass through all thy flock today, removing thence every spotted and speckled one, and every black one among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and [such] shall be my hire. And my righteousness shall answer for me hereafter, when thou comest about my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and black among the sheep, let that be stolen with me. And Laban said, Behold, let it be according to thy word. And he removed that day the he-goats that were ringstraked and spotted, and all the she-goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white in it, and all the black among the sheep, and gave [them] into the hands of his sons; and he set three days journey between himself and Jacob. And Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks. And Jacob took him fresh rods of white poplar, almond, and maple, and peeled white stripes in them, uncovering the white which was on the rods. And he set the rods which he had peeled before the flock in the gutters at the watering-places where the flock came to drink; and they were ardent when they came to drink. And the flock was ardent before the rods; and the flock brought forth ringstraked, speckled, and spotted. And Jacob separated the lambs, and set the faces of the flock toward the ringstraked and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he made himself separate flocks and put them not with Laban's flock. And it came to pass whensoever the strong cattle were ardent, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the flock in the gutters, that they might become ardent among the rods; but when the flock were feeble, he put them not in: so the feeble were Laban's and the stronger were Jacob's. And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and bondwomen, and bondmen, and camels and asses," (vers. 25-43).

Jacob was a man of faith, but failed in spirituality, and comes under the Lord's discipline that he might bear more fruit and better. As he had cheated at home, he suffered abroad, and at the hands of his mother's brother most of all. His patience under Laban's hardhearted wrongs testifies that he bowed to God. He could now bear to be lifted up by slow degrees. And the story of divine retribution here recorded is the turning-point.

Rachel's faith too was real and has the Spirit's attestation in the N.T. quite as distinctly as in the Old. But it is evident that, energetic as it was and in the face of the utmost peril, there was the manifest alloy of her old self which accompanied the precious metal. She did not hesitate to mislead. So here, whatever the gracious intervention of God for His injured servant, we could not conceive either his father or his grandfather adopting such an expedient as Jacob employed to acquire the fruit of his long and patient service that was due. Yet God condescended to use what without His power had been, if not in vain, but very partial.

Laban's covetous desire to profit by Jacob's strange bargain turned to the impoverishing of the self-occupied master, and the new and growing affluence of the long defrauded servant. Neither compunction appears on Laban's part for the advantage he had taken of his nephew, nor the least considerate affection for his daughters or their children. It was a righteous thing, as far as it could go in its way, to requite the evil-doer and recompense the sufferer. Nor can one fail to observe, at least as here it is pointed out, how peculiarly appropriate such a divine dealing was toward that one of the patriarchs who, more than any other, sets forth the chosen people. They derived their corporate name from him; their ups and downs were like his endless vicissitudes, failures, humiliations, to be turned at the end through divine mercy into everlasting blessing at the feet of their long rejected (but then how endeared!) Messiah. They too become wrestlers with God and men, and prevail. Great indeed shall be the day of Jezreel. But it will be a greatness due to God's grace and mercy, and deserved only by Him Who died for them, as for us and all others, when they at their worst proved themselves His bitterest foes. Thus shall no flesh glory; but he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

÷Chapter 11. THE FLIGHT FROM HARAN.

Gen 31:1-21.

Here we are in quite another atmosphere from that of Abraham or even Isaac. Kindred blood surrounds Jacob; yet what selfishness and deceit in the uncle, what planning (at least) to protect himself in the injured nephew! But God thwarted the covetous man and helped the long-suffering one. The result was abundance on this side and decay on that, which touched Laban and his sons to the quick: and their connection with Jacob soon came to a close, to his heart's relief. But how weak the faith!

"And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken all that [was] our father's; and of what [was] our father's hath he acquired all this glory. And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban and, behold, it [was] not toward him as beforetime. And Jehovah said to Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred, and I will be with thee. And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, and said to them, I see your father's countenance, that it [is] not toward me as beforetime: but the God of my father hath been with me. And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. And your father hath mocked me and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages, then all the flock bore speckled; and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy wages, then all the flock bore ringstraked. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and hath given [them] to me. And it came to pass at the time of the ardour of the flock, that I lifted up mine eyes and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams that leaped upon the flock [were] ringstraked, speckled, and spotted. And the angel of God said to me, in a dream, Jacob; and I said, Here [am] I. And he said, Lift up now thine eyes and see: all the rams that leap upon the flock [are] ringstraked, speckled, and spotted: for I have seen all that Laban doth to thee. I [am] the God of Bethel where thou anointedst the pillar, where thou vowedst a vow to me. Now arise, depart out of this land, and return to the land of thy kindred. And Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, [Is there] yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not reckoned of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath also quite devoured our money. For all the wealth that God hath taken from our father [is] ours and our children's: and now what God hath said to thee, do it. And Jacob rose up and set his sons and his wives upon camels; and he carried away all his cattle, and all his substance that he had acquired, the cattle of his possession that he had acquired in Padan-Aram, to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan. Now Laban was gone to shear his sheep. And Rachel stole the teraphim that [were] her father's. And Jacob deceived (or, stole the heart of) Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. And he fled with all that he had; and he rose up and passed over the river [the Euphrates] and set his face [toward] the mountain of Gilead" (vers. 1-21).

Truly Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in loving-kindness. For when the words of Laban's sons, and the looks of Laban himself disclosed their discontent (and no wonder), Jehovah told Jacob to return. to the land of his fathers, and to his kindred. Divine providence paid Jacob in some five or six years the wages of which Laban had defrauded him for twenty years. They, really wanted to get rid of Jacob, but shrank from saying so: for after all what was Laban's substance before Jacob appeared on the scene? Jacob also was too timid to act openly, but, encouraged from above, calls Rachel and Leah into conference. He could truly say that if Laban showed ill-will, the God of his father was with him; and that if he had sought to cheat him, God did not suffer his, hurt. He refers to the recognition of Jehovah as became him, and recalls how God took away Laban's cattle and gave them to himself. Even Jacob was too like Lot, and far from Abraham's superiority to earthly gain. But He that had wrought to repay the servant his kinsman's injustice recalled Bethel to forgetful Jacob, bidding him depart and return to the land of his kindred. The two wives. quite fell in. Their father had lost all hope of either. love or respect on. their part; so that they, low as there thoughts were, encouraged their husband to do as God directed. The moment was opportune. Laban was shearing his sheep, when Jacob without delay set wives and children on their camels, and stole away in hot haste with all his cattle and substance to go to his father's house in Canaan. Jehovah's compassion was clear and wondrous; but how mingled is not the other side? It is a lesson wholesome for us all, and will be so specially for Israel in the coming day.

How affecting is the mention of Rachel's theft! "And Rachel stole the teraphim that were her father's." It lets us into the secret root of Laban's iniquity. The fear of God was not there. Personal and family idolatry is disclosed which so often accompanied the profession of the true God. But what can be more offensive to God than to make him a senior or a sleeping partner in a partnership of the gods? Think too of Rachel's stealing at all from her father's goods! It is a queer note of the good Non-conformist, Matthew Henry, that "we are willing to hope (with Bishop Patrick) that she did not take them away as being covetous of the rich metal they were made of, much less for her own use, or out of any superstitious fears lest Laban, by consulting his teraphim, might know which way they were gone. Jacob, no doubt dwelt with his wives as a man of knowledge, and they were better than so; but she might design hereby to convince her father of the folly of his regard to those as gods, who could not secure themselves, Isa 46:1-2." This is all amiable but unwise. For we may gather the true reason from Israel, just after the solemnities of Sinai, bowing down to the golden calf "they made, which Aaron made," and from Israel's history down to the captivity in Babylon. We are bound to believe the profane and evil infatuation of man's heart instead of imagining other things. Jacob was deceived at the time; but Gen 35:2 proves that his house was not right with God in this respect, and that later he too became aware of it.

But there is a grave lesson lost by those who think there can be no danger of tampering with idols even for believers. There is no reason to suppose that Rachel intended to give up the one true God; even Laban scarcely went so far as that. Yet the fact that meets us here and throughout scripture is, that there was an evident tendency from early days to the latest in those who acknowledged the living God to indulge more or less in idolatry. The case of Solomon is the flagrant proof how great a snare this was for Israel in its brightest days. For what could be more solemn or humiliating than for the pages of inspiration to record, that the wise king, who built the magnificent temple to Jehovah's glory, the house where the Shechinah deigned to dwell, did also build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and this in the mount that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

How remarkable is the closing appeal in the First Epistle of John! "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." We cannot conceive that those to whom he wrote bowed to images of gold or silver, of wood or stone. There was a more subtle form of the evil which the apostle dreaded for saints in the apostolic day. But there can be no more powerful witness to the peril even for saints, than that the same Epistle which begins with the fullest manifestation of the True God in our Lord Jesus, so as to bring us into fellowship with the Father and with His Son, should end with such a warning. When anything outside the Godhead now known in Christ becomes an object to the heart religiously, it is an idol.

Nor was it long before distinct and shameless idolatry overspread Christendom, east and west, north and south.

÷Chapter 12. LABAN AND JACOB IN COVENANT.

Gen 31:22-55.

Jehovah was faithful and gracious, Jacob a fugitive. Laban soon pursued in hot haste with no friendly intent, but was compelled at the last to bow to God's protecting Jacob.

"And it was told Laban the third day that Jacob had fled. And he took his brethren with him and pursued after him a seven days' journey, and overtook him on mount Gilead. And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, Take care that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. And Laban came up with Jacob; and Jacob had pitched his tent on the mountain; Laban also with his brethren pitched on mount Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done that thou hast deceived me, and hast carried away my daughters as captives of sword? Why didst thou flee away covertly and steal away from me; and didst not tell me that I might have sent thee away with mirth and with songs, with tambour and with harp, and hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now thou hast acted foolishly. My hand is as God to do you hurt; but the God of your father last night spake to me, saying, Take care that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. And now thou must needs be gone, because thou greatly longedst after thy father's house, why hast thou stolen my gods? And Jacob answered and said to Laban, I was afraid for I said, Lest thou shouldest take by force thy daughters from me. With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern what [is] thine with me, and take [it] for thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them. And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two handmaids' tents, and found nothing, and he went out of Leah's tent into Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the teraphim, and put them under the camel's saddle, and she sat upon them. And Laban felt about all the tent and found them not. And she said to her father, Let there be no kindling in my lord's eyes that I cannot rise up before thee; for the manner of women is upon me. And he closely searched, but found not the teraphim. And Jacob was kindled, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What [is] my trespass, what my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? Whereas thou hast felt all about my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? Set [it] here before my brethren and thy brethren, and let them decide between us both. These twenty years I [have been] with thee: thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and rams of thy flock I have not eaten. What was torn I have not brought to thee; I bore the loss of it: of my hand didst thou require it, stolen by day or stolen by night. [Thus] I was; in the day drought consumed me, and frost by night; and my sleep fled from mine eyes. These twenty years I [have been] in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy flock; and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Had not my father's God, the God of Abraham and the fear of Isaac, been with me, surely empty now thou hadst sent me away. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked [thee] last night. And Laban answered and said to Jacob, The daughters [are] my daughters, and the sons my sons, and the flock my flock, and all that thou seest [is] mine; and what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their sons whom they have borne? And now come, let us make a covenant, land thou; and let it be for witness between me and thee. And Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. And Jacob said to his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones and made a heap and ate there on the heap. And Laban called it Jagar-sahadutha (Heap of Witness), and Jacob called it Galeed. And Laban said, This heap is witness between me and thee this day. Therefore is its name called Galeed and Mizpah (Watchtower); for he said, Watch, Jehovah, between me and thee, when we are hidden one from another. If thou afflict my daughters, and if thou shalt take wives besides my daughters, no man is with us; see, God [is] witness between me and thee. And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold the pillar which I have set up between me and thee. This heap [be] witness and the pillar [be] witness, that I pass not over this heap to thee, and that thou pass not over this heap and this pillar to me for harm. The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us. And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. And Jacob offered a sacrifice upon the mountain, and invited his brethren to eat bread: and they ate bread and lodged upon the mountain. And Laban rose early in the morning, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them; and Laban went and returned to his place" (22-55).

The state of both comes out so plainly that no words can give any help when speaking of them. Here all is set in the light; and Laban brings on himself the proofs of his selfishness and dishonesty. Jacob was under no bond to stay. Laban and his sons gave ample signs how distasteful to them were his growth and their decay. He wanted a word from God Who gave it to him. His wives were of one mind with his own. He therefore seized the first opportunity, which Laban's shearing furnished, to be gone. Now that Laban with all the clan overtook Jacob on mount Gilead, what righteous objection could be urged? Undoubtedly the warning God gave Laban alarmed his guilty conscience, though no true fear of God was there, no sense of his injustice, even if Jacob had been no more than a faithful servant. Still on both sides, what a contrast with the day when Rebekah left the same roof-tree, it seems not with mirth and songs, nor with tambour and harp, but with love and honour and the fear of God and the assurance of His blessing, which had much fled from that homestead. If he dreaded spoliation or violence, he complained of his stolen gods. These he prized next to his gains, with no shame for his avowal of heathenism; for where this is, Satan has already brought in darkness and death.

How little Jacob knew that Rachel had really stolen Laban's teraphim, to her own shame! Jacob's house too was not so with God as to make it hateful to her in every way. She had already shown herself the prey of low and vile superstition, which paves the way for idolatry in secret. But Jacob had no suspicion that his beloved was really guilty: else he had not been so quick to propose that such a one should not live. And she that had played false to God little scrupled to deceive her father as well as to rob him. Jacob, ignorant of it, broke into unwonted anger with Laban, whose greed and lack of all justice, to say nothing of affection, he exposes unsparingly, and could well say, that but for God's over-ruling he had now been sent empty away. What could Laban reply but that all were his, wives, children, flock? God was in none of his thoughts, any more than love for his daughters, or their children, or his son-in-law. But he tries to put a good face on the matter, and asks for a covenant between himself and Jacob; who leaves all the terms to Laban, and his wretched thoughts and fears, but solemnly gives execution to it, as well as the name that stood. Not only did he swear by the Fear of Isaac, but he offered peace-offerings; and they ate bread together.

It is a sorry spectacle to the eye of faith; retribution for Laban, rescue for Jacob and his house through God's overruling hand and goodness: but within the chosen family idolatrous images stolen by the wife and unknown to the husband, who, instead of being crushed by Laban, is besought for a covenant with himself. For, as he feared not God, he had no confidence in his own nearest connection. But what had not Jacob to learn, as he weighed his old self-seeking and scheming before Jehovah?

÷Chapter 13. JACOB IN DISTRESS, AND PRAYING.

Gen 32:1-12.

Laban went and returned to his place, as we have seen. Of him we hear no more.

"And Jacob went on his way; and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This [is] the camp of God. And he called the name of that place Mahanaim (two camps). And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother into the land of Seir, the field of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak to my lord, to Esau: Thy servant Jacob speaketh thus. With Laban I have sojourned and tarried until now; and I have oxen, and asses, sheep, and bondmen and bondwomen; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight. And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother, to Esau; and he also cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that [was] with him, and the sheep and the herds and the camels, into two companies (camps). And he said, If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the company which is left shall escape. And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, Jehovah, who saidst to me, Return to thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee; I am less than all the mercies and all the truth that thou hast shown unto thy servant; for with my stall I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two companies. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from Esau's hand; for I fear him, lest he come and smite me, [and] the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will certainly deal well with thee, and make thy seed as sand of the sea which cannot be numbered for multitude" (1-12).

When a lonely fugitive from his father's house Jacob beheld in a dream on his way to Haran a ladder from earth to heaven, with angels of God ascending and descending on it, but above it Jehovah promising His presence and eventual blessing. Here again angels of God met him, a fugitive, so that, when he saw them, he recognised the gracious aim, This is God's host, and named the place accordingly. But neither the dream nor the sight of angels sufficed for Jacob's need. The fear of Laban was soon followed by his sorry terror of Esau. So it must be, just because Jacob was born of God, but with an unpurged conscience and a heart not at rest to enjoy the only object that satisfies. Even visions in this case are of little power and would soon be forgotten.

We see the lesson of faith feebly learnt. Again he has recourse to his plans, and sends messengers to his brother in Seir, with words skilfully framed to conciliate "my lord Esau," and "thy servant Jacob." Esau was not to fear that Jacob needed to encroach on a brother or a father; he had ample resources of his own, and only sought grace in his sight. But no answer from Esau filled Jacob with alarm and distress; especially as the messengers told him that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. Why, but to overwhelm him? It was unbelief of Him who cannot forget His promise but can control and turn the most alien spirit.

Again, he betakes himself to his devices, dividing the people and the stock into two companies, saying, If Esau come to the one and smite it, then shall the other escape. How short and sad is man's prudence! He that arrested Laban in his hostile intentions and made him depart with a kiss all round, could he not bring Esau to Jacob with an embrace and not without tears? It is his state that the Holy Spirit here recounts for everlasting profit, that we be not anxious for the morrow, but cast all upon the God of all grace, because He cares for us. Jacob had as yet a bad conscience, and never yet faced it all out in God's presence. Yet God was faithful to him, not he to God.

After the trembling man had made his plan, he betakes himself to God, and we may trace the work slowly going on in his soul. He reminds Jehovah the God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac, that it was at His bidding he was returning to his country and kindred. He owns his unworthiness of the least of all His mercies and of all His truth. He compares his destitution when he first crossed the Jordan with his two companies at present. He earnestly entreats his deliverance from the hand of his brother Esau, whom he dreaded both for himself and for the mother with the children. Then finally he reminds Him of His promise of a surety to do him good, and make his posterity as sand of the sea innumerable. We can readily perceive that it was faith, but as yet mingled with human expedients. Hence was he far from peaceful reckoning on God, and even in abject terror of Esau.

The fact is that he was dissatisfied with himself, and feels the need of drawing near to God in a way he had never yet known. The interesting details of this we find in the next page of the divine story, a very important epoch in Jacob's experience. His plans did nothing toward softening Esau, any more than relieving himself from his dread. But he was now to be alone with God who took him up in a way worthy of Himself, and laid the basis for the deepening work in his soul ever after, and a blessing which. at length shone in Jacob's declining years beyond his father or even his grandfather. But in his then low estate spiritually grace was about to meet him that very night, little as his troubled soul looked for it, and in a manner foreign to all natural thoughts.

÷Chapter 14. GOD WRESTLING WITH JACOB.

Gen 32:13-32.

The vision of two bands of angels did not deliver Jacob from fear for himself and his two bands. He was not at ease with God, though a believer. All that hindered communion was not yet judged; and hence his abject dread of Esau, of whose change of feeling toward himself he had no idea. Making his own plan of defence, he then prayed for Jehovah's blessing for deliverance from Esau. Further details are given in vers. 13-21; and the rest follows, where God takes Jacob in hand.

"And he lodged there that night; and took of what came to his hands a gift for Esau his brother; two hundred she-goats, and twenty he-goats; two hundred ewes, and twenty rams; thirty milch camels with their colts: forty kine, and ten bulls; twenty she-asses, and ten young asses. And he delivered [them] into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself: and he said to his servants, Go on before me, and put a space between drove and drove. And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meets thee, and asks thee, saying, Whose [art] thou? and whither goest thou? and whose [are] these before thee? then shalt thou say, Thy servant Jacob's, it [is] a gift sent to my lord Esau; and, behold, he also [is] behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, According to this word shall ye speak to Esau when ye find him. And ye shall say moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob [is] behind us. For he said, I will propitiate him with the gift that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face: perhaps he will accept me. And the gift went over before him; and he himself lodged that night in the camp (or, band)."

Next we come to God's dealing with him that he might be blessed more abundantly.

"And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two maidservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford of Jabbok; and he took them and led them over the stream, and sent over what he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the rising of the dawn. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh: and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the dawn ariseth. And he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And he said to him, What [is] thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Not Jacob shall be called henceforth thy name, but Israel; for thou hast wrestled with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked and said, Tell, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore askest thou after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And the sun rose upon him as he passed over Penuel, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat. not the sinew that shrank, which [is] upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip (or, that shrank)" (vers. 22-32).

Jacob must be alone with God. He was not yet at Bethel, but had a needed meeting meanwhile in the dark. Not so much as men say, Jacob wrestling with God, true as this may be in its measure, but yet more God wrestling with Jacob. "There wrestled a man with him until the rise of the dawn." It was grace that gave him perseverance and to prevail, but in a way contrary to man's thoughts; not in any degree Jacob's goodness, wisdom, and power, but God's faithful mercy. Hence He touched the hollow or socket of Jacob's thigh, so that it became out of joint. This would render powerless the strongest; but it was not so here. His grace enabled Jacob to hold on. He deigns then to say to Jacob, Let me go, for the dawn ariseth: as Jacob answers, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. Thereon Jacob gets his new name, no more the supplanter but a prince of God — Israel, "for thou hast wrestled with God and with men, and hast prevailed." So wrought divine mercy while withering natural strength; but there is no revelation of His name as to Abraham; and instead of drawing out his intercession for others, God wrestles with himself. Prevail he must in order to be blessed; but there is no communion. The name is undivulged as later to Manoah, before the man of overcoming strength was born, who wrought heroic wonders, yet with surprisingly little moral power. And so it is here with Jacob in his way, who called the name of the place Peniel; "for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Think of the totally different issue when Jehovah appeared to Abraham both in Genesis 17 and Genesis 18. Then "He went away as soon as He had left communing with Abraham." The wife of Manoah understood God better than her husband.

Thenceforth Jacob halted upon his thigh. God would have him permanently learn the lesson of His strength displayed in human weakness. So the sun rose on his halting as he passed Penuel; and therefore the children of Israel eat not the sinew that shrank which is upon the hollow of the thigh, to this day. Would to God that they read its meaning in the light, instead of going about to establish their own righteousness and refusing to submit to His righteousness! Nor is it Jews only that need to learn this great truth; for it is ever fading more and more away from Christendom, where flesh is increasingly gloried in, and superstition and rationalism contend for the mastery against God and His Christ.

÷Chapter 15. MEETING OF JACOB AND ESAU.

Gen 33:1-15.

The bringing of Jacob into communion with God was not yet complete; and as God's dealing with him in the last chapter indicates it, so does this chapter confirm it. He lifted up his eyes and looked; but God was greater than his fears, though he still devised the best he could whether Esau came as a friend or as a foe. Jacob can hardly be said here to walk by faith, not by sight; but God was faithful in His providence.

"And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children to Leah and to Rachel and to the two maid-servants; and he put the maid-servants and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindmost. And he passed over before them and bowed to the earth seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him; and they wept. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children, and said, Who [are] these with thee? And he said, The children whom God hath graciously given thy servant. And the maid-servants drew near, they and their children, and they bowed. And Leah also drew near and her children, and they bowed. And after drew near Joseph and Rachel, and they bowed. And he said, What [meanest] thou [by] all this band (or, camp) which I met? And he said, To find favour in the eyes of my lord. And Esau said, I have much, my brother; let that which [is] thine be to thee. And Jacob said, No, I pray thee: if now I have found favour in thine eyes, then receive my present at my hand; for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen God's face, and thou wast pleased with me. Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought thee, because graciously hath God dealt with me, and because I have all. And he urged him, and he took [it]. And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go; and I will go before thee. And he said to him, My lord knoweth the children [are] tender, and the flocks and the herds with young [are] with me; and overdrive them one day, then all the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant, and I will lead on softly according to the pace of the cattle that are before me, and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord unto Seir. And Esau said, Let me leave, I pray thee, of the people that [are] with me. And he said, Why this? Let me find favour in my lord's eyes" (vers. 1-15).

None of the patriarchs passed through such inquietude as Jacob. So it must be if one is out of communion with God; who avails Himself of anxiety and change and danger to do us good and restore the soul at length. Even after God wrestled with him and enabled him to wrestle with God for His blessing, it was as yet far short of God's mind. For how poor that he could say no more than "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved!" God "talked with" His friend Abraham, revealing His Name as the Almighty, covenanted to make him father of many nations with things to come of Him, and revealed what He was going to do to the guilty cities of the plain, so as to draw out his intercession for righteous Lot.

But here Jacob was still far from peace as he considered Esau. He never thought of God's power over the hearts of all, and His intention of over-ruling Esau's resentment, to fill his heart with warm natural affection. As Jacob passed before the carefully arranged company of women and children, and bowed to the ground abjectly till he came near his brother, Esau ran to meet him, embraced him, fell on his neck, and kissed him. In his dread Jacob had prepared Esau for his abundant substance, but was silent about his family. Hence the enquiry, "Who are these with you?" to which Jacob, now getting more at ease, answers as became a believer, "The children whom God hath graciously given thy servant." But when Esau asks the meaning of all the band, or drove, he had met, he says, "To find favour in the eyes of my lord." To this Esau rejoins, "I have" (not only enough but) "much, my brother; let what is thine be to thee," and Jacob goes yet further in pressing its acceptance, "for I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. Take, pray, my blessing that is brought thee, because God hath graciously dealt with me, and because I have all." In fact it was a gift meant to avert the anger and strong wrath he apprehended; but the manner and the terms in which it was couched hardly deserve the appreciation commonly expressed thereon. God had wrought pitifully: to Him indeed he owed thanksgiving; while he might well be touched by brotherly affection instead of all that he feared.

It may be painful to notice, but it is well to heed, what follows as showing Jacob's state even then. When Esau proposes that they should proceed, and himself lead the way, Jacob pleads the tenderness of the children and such of the flocks and herds as would all die, if overdriven one day, and begs his lord to pass over, whilst he should lead on softly, till he came unto his "lord" in Seir. Then on Esau's offer of some of his trained convoy he replies, "Why this? Let me find favour in my lord's eyes." The truth is, that he was most anxious to get rid of his brother, and that he had not the smallest intention of going to Seir. He was going to Succoth. Viewed in the light of God, Jacob was not truthful in what he said to his brother. There was evil still unjudged in those around, and he spoke with little scruple but with characteristic fertility of excuse.

÷Chapter 16. SUCCOTH AND SHECHEM.

Gen 33:16-20.

God was faithful to Jacob, but not yet Jacob to God, Who still kept up reserve, and could not yet reveal His name as He did to Abraham and Isaac, and would in due time to Jacob (Gen 35:11). There was not the self-judgment that made the way for it. Hence with all his obsequiousness to his brother there Was not even candour, and still less faith in activity.

"And Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him a house, and for his cattle he made booths. Therefore the name of the place was called Succoth (Booths). And Jacob came [in] peace [to the] city Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he. came from Padan-Aram, and encamped before the city. And he bought an allotment of the field where he had spread his tent, at the hand of Hamor's sons, father of Shechem, for a hundred kesitahs; (lambs). And he set up there an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel" (vers. 16-20).

Esau returned the same day to his own place, the scene hostile to Israel, and hateful to God, all the more because of the near relationship which drew down His deepening abhorrence. For vengeance belongs to Jehovah who will not permit unauthorised and guilty man to take it in hand. Jacob evasively journeys to Succoth, which should be marked east of the Jordan,\* though there was a place so named west of that river, as elsewhere too Exo 12:37, Num 33:5-6). But the Succoth of Jacob's dwelling was the place given to the Gadites (Jos 13:27) and made memorable by the princes who refused bread to Gideon and his three hundred, and were threshed for their baseness with the thorns of the wilderness and briers.

\*Burckhardt identified this Succoth, or Sukkot as he calls it from the Arabic. Dr. Robinson and Van de Velde speak of the western place called Sakut which ought not to be confounded with the eastern. Jerome (Quaest. in Gen 33:16) had long before made the just discrimination.

There Jacob built him a house, as he made booths for his cattle which gave occasion to the name of the spot. But the serious indication of the patriarch's state was the building of a house for himself in manifest departure from the pilgrim practice of his fathers, and indeed his own, as is described in Heb 11:9, "By faith he (Abraham) became a sojourner in the land of promise [which gave it special emphasis] not as his own, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the joint-heirs of the same promise." It is incorrect to say with Matthew Henry that Jacob "was glad of booths," as contrasted with his descendants in houses of stone. The very point of God's word here is that he "built him a house," whereas his fathers dwelt in tents even in the land of promise. It was marked indifference and declension in this respect; and the more because Jacob was only on his way to the land. It was yielding like other men to the desire for the ease and convenience of a more settled and convenient abode.

At length however a movement was made. "And Jacob came in peace to the city Shechem which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-Aram, and encamped before the city. And he bought in allotment of the field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of Hamor's sons, father of Shechem, for a hundred kesitahs (lambs)."\*

\*According to Gesenius k - "equivalent," but Sept., Vulg., and Onkelos give the meaning of a "lamb."

It is hardly needful to justify "in peace" from "to Shalem" as in the A.V. following the Sept., Syr. Pesch., and Vulgate, nor from the "safe and sound" of the Targum of Onkelos and the Rabbis, with most Germans, in the desire to exalt Jacob, and pretend that his halting passed quite away, contrary to any simple impression conveyed by the end of Genesis 32. There is indeed a seeming confirmation of the first sense in the fact of a place still called *Salim* between Shechem and the Jordan. But this is a mere coincidence, though it weighed with Jerome and Epiphanius. For "in peace" is in contrast with his perturbation of mind through dread of Esau between Peniel and Succoth, which is surely pertinent to the purpose. Yet as he failed in Succoth, so did he yet more in Shechem, which had a pointed claim on him beyond Shalem; for there it was that the father of the faithful had his first manifestation of Jehovah in Canaan, and the promise to give that land to his seed; and there he built an altar to Jehovah that appeared to him. "And he bought an allotment of the field where he had spread his tent, at the hand of Hamor's sons, father of Shechem, for a hundred kesitahs." How different from him who had none inheritance given him in the land, no, not to set his foot on, save what he bought to lay his dead in at a later day! Jacob thus departed more and more from the position of a sojourner.

But did not Jacob redeem his character as saint by his subsequent act? Not quite as yet. "And he set up an altar there and called it El-Elohe-Israel." In setting up an altar, where he first spread his tent in the promised land, he was undoubtedly right. He had not raised, nor could he properly raise one, outside the land of God's gift. But he also made evident his falling short of God's mind by the name he gave it. "God, the God of Israel" (ver. 20) did not rise up to the due patriarchal title of relationship; it was not promise, but his own measure of experience. It was short of Bethel; and Jacob must go through more and more humbling experience, and God must dislodge him from settling on the field he had purchased from the Hivite, to bring him to the place of his vow, where he would make an altar to God that appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother. Not even yet were the strange gods that defiled his household put. away. How could there be true communion till then? Yet there was unfailing, patient, and tender mercy. But only there and thus could he enjoy the portion of God as He then revealed Himself. How blessed and holy are His ways!

÷Chapter 17. DINAH AND HER BROTHERS.

Genesis 34.

One wrong step in departure from our true position before the Lord leads to many a sin, scandal, and sorrow. So we find here as the consequence of Jacob's buying the land of the Hivite, and building himself a house. His stay at Succoth and Shechem covers some ten years. He must be unsettled to get him back to his pilgrim place; but the way was painful for all, and a deep shame and humiliation and fear for the patriarch.

"And Dinah, daughter of Leah whom she bore to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the land, saw her, and he took her, and lay with her, and humbled her. And his soul clave unto Dinah daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spoke to the heart of the damsel. And Shechem spoke unto Hamor his father, saying, Take me this girl to wife. And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; and his sons were with his cattle in the field; and Jacob held his peace until they came. And Hamor father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to talk to him. And Jacob's sons came from the field when they heard [it], and the men were grieved, and they were greatly inflamed, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; for so it ought not to be done.

"And Hamor spoke to them, saying, My son Shechem's soul longeth for your daughter: I pray you, give her him to wife. And make marriages with us, [and] give your daughters to us, and take our daughters unto you. And ye shall dwell with us; and the land shall be before you: dwell and trade in it, and get you possessions therein. And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give. Ask of me very much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say to me. but give me the damsel to wife. And Jacob's sons answered Shechem and Hamor his father with deceit, and spoke, because he had defiled Dinah their sister, and said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to a man that is uncircumcised; for that [were] a reproach unto us. But only in this will we consent unto you: if ye will be as we, that every male of you be circumcised; then will we give our daughters unto you, and take your daughters unto us; and we will dwell with you, and be one people. But if ye hearken not unto us, to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go away.

"And their words were good in the eyes of Hamor and in the eyes of Shechem, Hamor's son. And the youth deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter; and he [was] honourable above all his father's house. and Hamor and Shechem his son came unto their city's gate, and spoke unto the men of their city, saying, These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein. And the land, behold, [it is] wide on both sides before them. Let us take to us their daughters for wives, and our daughters let us give to them. Only in this will the men consent unto us, to dwell with us, to be one people, in circumcising among us every male as they [are] circumcised. Their cattle, and their substance, and every beast of theirs, [shall] they not [be] ours? only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us. And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city, and every male was circumcised, all that went out at the gate of his city" (vers. 1-24).

The only daughter of Jacob had no doubt a difficult part to play in the midst of so many brothers, to say nothing of other characteristics of the household. As the destroying incident of the chapter was soon followed by all quitting the scene, she may have been about fourteen or fifteen years old. With or without the sanction of her parents Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land. Josephus alleges a festive gathering. What had she to do with them in any way? All but the profane knew that the time would come for their judgment, that the seed of Abraham should possess the land; and their iniquity was great though not yet full, Apart from that, how giddy she and dangerous! She seems to have been as independent of her mother, as the young men certainly were beyond taking counsel of their father. Her gadding curiosity exposed her to the young prince of the land, who, smitten with her and carried away by his passion, seduced if he did not by force outrage her. Her poor father was silent till the sons returned from work. Meanwhile Shechem earnestly sought marriage at any price, and his father repaired to Jacob, pleading hard for his son's set desire to have her as wife, and offering the readiest terms of peace between the peoples, as Shechem urged for himself.

Thereon Jacob's sons interposed with guile the condition of circumcision for every male. Not the smallest thought or wish had they for inviting the Shechemites into the covenant. It was the basest treachery in order to ensnare and massacre them. Jacob had nothing to do with the cruel secret. Their pride and revenge ignored God as it did their father. Shechem was guilty of a great wrong; but Dinah too was in fault. Neither their mothers nor their grandmother came of circumcised fathers; nor did any pious or delicate reluctance appear in their own marriages. The condition was a lying and cowardly pretext to carry out their resentment to the uttermost. Hamor and Shechem fell into the trap, and had influence enough to persuade all their townsmen with themselves to submit to the painful rite, and its unexpected peril.

Then, when the inflammation was at its height for the beguiled Hivites, the bloody crisis came, executed by the two of the least scruple.

"And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took each his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. And Hamor and Shechem his son they slew with the edge of the sword; and they took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out. Jacob's sons came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister. Their flocks and their herds and their asses, and that which [was] in the city, and that which [was] in the field they took; and all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives, they took captive and spoiled, even all that [was] in the house" (vers. 25-29).

How solemn is the calm with which scripture recounts this whole affair of corruption and violence, covered and effected by odious hypocrisy, in which the chosen race were the perpetrators and Canaanites were the victims! Still it is going too far to say that Jacob felt only the consequence, not the appalling iniquity. It is related here, "And Jacob said to Simeon and to Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and I [am] few in number, and they will gather themselves together against me, and smite me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. And they said, As with a harlot should he deal with our sister (vers. 30, 31)?" Jacob was no doubt filled with alarm, so as to forget God's promise; but who can forget the sense of this dark and hateful day he expressed on his dying bed in words of prophetic power?

"Simeon and Levi [are] brethren; Instruments of violence their swords. Come not thou into their council, my soul; With their assembly be not thou united, mine honour; For in their anger they slew men, And in their wantonness they houghed oxen. Cursed their anger, for [it was] fierce, And their, wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, And scatter them in Israel" (Gen 49:5-7).

÷Chapter 18. GO UP TO BETHEL.

Gen 35:1-8.

The humbling experiences of Jacob had not come to their close; but the way was being prepared for better blessing than he had yet known, and a nearer, truer, approach to what had been the cherished portion of Abraham and Isaac. Had he forgotten his vow at Bethel? Why so slow after so many mercies? Why the delay at Succoth, and yet more disastrously at Shechem? where only God's overruling hand sheltered them from vengeance after the cruel plot of. Simeon and Levi. No doubt Shechem had behaved unrighteously, but Jacob's sons hypocritically and without mercy. God in grace interfered, and this leads to a decisive change.

"And God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwelt there; and make there an altar to God that appeared to thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. And Jacob said to his household, and to all that [were] with him, Put away the strange gods that [are] among you, and cleanse yourselves, and change your garments; and we will arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar to God that answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way that I went. And they gave to Jacob all the strange gods that [were] in their hand, and the rings that [were] in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth that [was] by Shechem. And they journeyed; and the terror of God was upon the cities that [were] round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. And Jacob came to Luz which [is] in the land of Canaan, that [is], Bethel, he and all the people that [were] with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place El-bethel; because there God had appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother. And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died: and she was buried beneath Bethel, under the oak; and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth" (vers. 1-8).

Jacob was now to meet God, as he had never hitherto done. This he realised from the words spoken to him. And the effect was immediate and great on his conscience. Put away, said he to all that were with him, the strange gods that are among you. We may be assured that he was as much deceived by Rachel's trick as her father, and that his indignant denial of false gods, stolen and secreted, was simple and genuine. "With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live." Never would he have spoken thus if the least suspicion of his beloved Rachel's dishonesty and dishonour of God had crossed his mind. But he had learnt it since, and had taken it quietly. But to meet God thus woke him up from his indifference. Even the lawless vengeance it Shechem weighed not so heavily. "Put away the strange gods that are among you" took the first place in his charge. This did not trouble him at Succoth, or at Shechem; but God's call to Bethel at once cast light on his carelessness, and produced self-judgment.

Far was Jehovah from saying of him, "I know that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice, in order that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham what he hath spoken of him." It was the reason of their being to the fathers chosen, called, and faithful. Even Terah was an idolater; and Abraham was separated to the one true God by the promises of which sovereign grace made him and his seed in the line of Isaac the depositary. Yet now his son was forced to feel and confess the sinful presence of strange gods in the midst of his household.

No wonder that his was a chequered lot; but how great the goodness that had watched over his trials and intermingled mercy at every time of need, and at length summoned him to Bethel, that he might clear himself and his house from their veiled ungodliness, and return to consistency with his calling! "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and cleanse yourselves, and change your garments; and we will arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar to God that answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way that I went." Who of us has followed the Lord without the proofs of the same fidelity on His part? chastising our waywardness too that we might be partakers of His holiness?

"And they gave to Jacob all the strange gods that were in their hand, and the rings that were in their cars; and Jacob buried them under the terebinth that was by Shechem." Idolatry pervaded even their little ornaments, all of which had therefore to disappear. "And they journeyed; and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them; and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." The living God knows how to control and dispose the heart, not only of enemies, but of those naturally resenting injury. Let His children fear and withal trust Him.

"And Jacob came to Luz which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar and called the place El-bethel; because God there had appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother." It is not now an altar called by a name that limits God to himself like El-Elohe-Israel. His faith is now cleared, and fuller. He is the God of God's house, which is richer, better, and higher up the source of blessing.

"And Deborah Rebekah's nurse died; and she was buried beneath Bethel under the oak; and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth," the oak of weeping. It is remarkable that she should have joined Jacob's household, no doubt after Rebekah's death. There her heart turned, her mistress gone, to Rebekah's beloved son. That they requited her love is plain from the record of their tears.

÷Chapter 19. THE PATRIARCHAL NAME OF GOD REVEALED TO JACOB.

Gen 35:9-15.

Slow indeed had been Jacob's steps to Bethel. Long his stay in Padan-aram; and afterward delay followed in Succoth and in Shechem, till he was dislodged at last by sin and sorrow, shame and fear, yet with God ever faithful and true.

"And God appeared to Jacob again, after he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, Thy name [is] Jacob; thy name shall not henceforth be called Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name. And he called his name Israel. And God said to him, I [am] God Almighty [El-Shaddai ]; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings out of thy loins shall come; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it; and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured on it a drink-offering, and he poured on it oil. And Jacob called the name of the place, where God spoke with him, Bethel" (vers. 9-15).

It was no mysterious conflict in the dark as at Peniel with sentence of death put on the flesh. Nor was it a vision of the night as at this same Bethel long before, when Jacob dreamed, and Jehovah stood above the ladder reaching to heaven, with angels of God ascending and descending on it. Still it is not here Jehovah as such, but, "God" that now appeared to Jacob in grace, when come after so many vicissitudes to the scene of his vow, and blessed. O what a God is the only true God!

God to him as to his fathers reveals Himself as God Almighty. There is not a word about the faults which rendered chastisement necessary, but simply God blessing him. But no such rich and enlarged scope appears as we have in Genesis 12, no such oath as Jehovah swore on the virtual sacrifice of Abraham's only-begotten, raised from the dead in a parable, with its wonderful distinction between the numerous seed with power over their enemies, and the seed to which no number is attached, the one seed with blessing for the Gentiles, as the apostle draws it out in Galatians 3. Nor are there such terms as when Jehovah appeared to Isaac when He bade *him* not go down into Egypt, but sojourn in Canaan, spite of famine there, where He would be with him and bless him as He did.

Yet it was no longer Jacob entreating God for His blessing: God of His own accord appeared and blessed him, returned as he was out of the land of the stranger, and taught many a lesson about himself "in the way" as well as out of it. But the blessing however gracious is in a lower key and of a more general character as befitted the name Elohim rather than Jehovah. Still Jacob has Him, truly and unasked, revealed to him, as to Abraham and Isaac, by the proper patriarchal title of El-Shaddai, God Almighty. Nor did any one of the fathers need that assurance of protective might so much as that "worm" Jacob.

His name too is not to be henceforth called Jacob, the supplanter, but Israel, the wrestler or prince of God. The manner is striking. For God speaks of it as if it had been then given, and not merely confirmed, as suited to one who was come back to the land, and not a fugitive from his father's house (though greatly by his own sins, whatever the wickedness of Esau might have been and was). He has like Abraham in Genesis 17 the promise of nations and kings of his line; but nothing here goes beyond the bounds and glory of Israel and the land.

"And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him." We may compare this favour to Jacob with the similar terms as to Abraham in Gen 17:22. What grace to both! and what an unspeakable difference from the mythological dreams of the intercourse of the gods with Gentile mankind, even if these had been true! But as lies go with moral corruption, and spurious religion degrades man below natural conscience, what a joy to know that the bright side is yet to come for both Israel and the Gentiles! Then the promises, so long inert through unbelief, will be by divine grace bound up with a rejected Messiah and an everlasting redemption and the new covenant in its literal and direct force, and the people, so long blind, will look to Him whom they pierced, and mourn for Him as for an only son. Meanwhile between His two comings the heavenly counsels of God are revealed in Christ dead, risen, and glorified in heaven, and now made known to the church His body, truly the great mystery.

But great too will be the day of Jezreel in the land, and great the blessing of the nations, under Him who will be the head and centre of all glory heavenly and earthly (Eph 1:10). For nothing less than this will accomplish the purpose that God intends for the glory of Him who suffered to the uttermost that His Father might be glorified even as to sin. The universe will be reconciled and set under Him to the joy of every creature, and to the praise of God.

Can one wonder that Jacob set up a pillar of stone to mark that spot of divine grace, and poured a drink-offering and oil upon it, and called its name Bethel with a fulness of honour unknown before?

÷Chapter 20. RACHEL'S DEATH.

Gen 35:16-20.

It was not without aim and interest that the Holy Spirit recorded the decease of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, and the oak of weeping under which she was buried at Bethel. God means His people to feel the blank of a faithful domestic, and all the more if that fidelity covered a long space backward. Remarkable is it too that she should now be heard of, not in Isaac's tent but in that of Jacob. What many have inferred hence of Jacob's visits to his father ere this we leave: scripture is silent even as to when Rebekah died. But we may be sure that the aged nurse abode with her beloved mistress at least till then. A nearer bereavement was at hand.

"And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was yet some way to come to Ephrath; and Rachel travailed, and it went hard with her in childbirth, And it came to pass when it went hard in her bearing, that the midwife said to her, Fear not; for this also [is] a son for thee. And it came to pass as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Benoni [son of my sorrow]; but his father called him Benjamin [son of right hand]. And Rachel died, and was buried on the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave, which [is] the pillar of Rachel's grave to [this] day" (vers. 16-20).

The moral government of God, now by the way, no more fails than His grace from the beginning to, the end. Rachel had greatly sinned and kept her husband in the dark, when he unconsciously said that one guilty should not live. Her theft was not only a sin against her father, but in what she stole a heinous insult to God. Nor evidence have we that there was soon, if ever, adequate self-judgment. It is plain that Jacob at length became aware of idols in his household; the sin of which God's call to Bethel laid on his conscience, as we have already seen. To take his beloved away was a chastening, not to her only but to him also.

1Co 11:27-32 is a most instructive teaching on the application of this truth, in which we learn the security of grace on the one hand, and on the other the Lord's dealing with the inconsistent ways of those that are His. The ignorance of the truth even among pious men, notwithstanding their ability and learning is strikingly betrayed in the mistranslation of a word all-important for the true sense. It is not "damnation" but "judgment" in ver. 29, expressly contrasted with "condemnation" in ver. 32. The Lord was then judging by sickness and even death the faulty state and walk of the Corinthian saints, that they should not be condemned with the world, that is, because they were His and to be kept from "damnation." They were judged in this temporal way for the blessing of their souls. It is a universal principle of God, and as real in the O.T. as it is plain in the N.T. For God is and must be God everywhere. Only the display of grace under the gospel brings out, not only His sovereign grace but, His moral government with special clearness.

Rachel's name for the new-born child expresses her sorrow; Jacob, whatever his natural feelings over the dying wife of his heart, looks forward in hope. But it is not in any degree a heavenly hope in Benjamin, as Abraham had in Isaac, received from death to resurrection in a parable. It is the pledge of Israel in power, when she that represented the former state passes away by death. Israel must at the close be brought through deep if not deadly affliction before emerging into victory through their long disowned Messiah over all their foes on the earth.

"Fear not" from the attendant was well-meant. From the Lord it had been a word of power. But He was calling her away from a scene where she had failed in testimony to Him, and compromised her husband too. How could she be trusted for training her offspring in His fear? God had added another son, as she had said in faith when her firstborn was given. It was fitting that she should depart.

Little thought Jacob, when he erected a pillar of thanksgiving at Bethel in the place where God talked with him, that he would so soon after erect another pillar, and this of sorrow upon Rachel's grave. But he bows to the hand of chastening: whom the Lord loves, He chastises, and scourges every son whom He receives. Jacob could not know, as it was not yet revealed, that near this very Ephrath should be born the King of Israel, the pledge and type of great David's greater Son, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. The smitten Judge of Israel, who gave up His guilty people, will surely restore them, so that they shall abide, and He be great unto the ends of the earth. And the day hastens.

Rachel dies, but the pillar that records it stands in Israel's land and history till the kingdom. And her weeping for her children, as the weeping prophet wrote, is with truth and pathos remarkably applied when the King was born, and preserved from the murderous intent of the usurping Edomite, the Rome — favoured enemy within.

Benjamin himself, the son of his father's right-hand, typifies Christ, not at all as head of the church, but as the conquering Son of might when the kingdom is established in the land as indeed the earth, and the enemies parish before Him. This evidently looks on to the future day of power and glory for the earth: a manifest contrast with Him who suffered and sits hidden in the heavens.

But we may also observe that the two wives of Jacob aptly represent, Leah the fruitful, and mother of the nations, and Rachel, Israel's first love, but only a mother after Leah had borne abundantly. Then of her who typified Israel after the flesh comes Joseph, the bright witness of Christ sold and separate from His brethren, at the right of Him who had the larger rule of the world while the Jews were disowned. But at length she dying gives birth to the son of her sorrow, but son of his father's right hand; who shall devour the prey in the morning and at even divide the spoil (Gen 49:27). "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong."

The effort of ancient fathers and modern theologians to make every type point to Christian association is the fruit of ignorance as to the extensive and varied glories of Christ, if not effacing yet assuredly lowering the proper brightness of His heavenly exaltation and of the church's union with Him. The late Bp. Chr. Wordsworth was a learned and pious man; but his commentary here and everywhere yields the fullest evidence of this theological bias, shared by the Puritan, the Low, and the Broad Schools, no less than by his own, the so-called High, little as he might relish such companions. Faith alone rises to the enjoyment of heavenly things. Tradition has classes in its school to suit the lovers of antiquity and of novelty, of the law and of free thought. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Not the church, but Christ, is the true centre of divine purpose, which embraces the things which are in heaven as well as the things that are on earth. Both are to be, not only set under Christ, but this in visible display at His appearing and kingdom. Making the church all, instead of maintaining its real position, invariably has the effect of lowering and confusing the truth. For the church in this case takes the place of Israel, and seeks earthly things, ease, honour, riches, and power. Our true calling is now to suffer with and for Christ, waiting for heavenly glory at His coming; and our right witness is that God will then restore Israel to more than pristine blessing in the promised land to the joy of all the nations of the earth under the great King.

÷Chapter 21. ISRAEL PUT TO SHAME, AND ISAAC'S DEATH.

Gen 35:21-29.

Jacob had not yet reached the end of his journeyings, any more than of his sorrows, a man of the most varied experience among the fathers, as Isaac had the least. So he said later to Pharaoh, Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. Yet this painful experience under the governing hand of God was blessed to his soul; and the Spirit of God marks it here by the name of "Israel," not conferred only but here used historically, as we find it again when years after he took another journey still more eventful (Gen 46:1; Gen 46:30; Gen 48:2, etc.).

"And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent on the other side of Migdal-Eder (Tower of the flocks). And it came to pass when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine; and Israel heard of [it]. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: the sons of Leah, Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun; the sons of Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin; and the sons of Bilhah Rachel's handmaid, Dan and Naphtali; and the sons of Zilpah Leah's handmaid, Gad and Asher. These [are] the sons of Jacob that were born to him in Padan-Aram. And Jacob came to Isaac his father to Mamre, to Kirjath-Arba, which [is] Hebron; where Abraham had sojourned, and Isaac. And the days of Isaac were a hundred and eighty years. And Isaac expired and died, and was gathered to his peoples, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him" (vers. 21-29).

There is a day at hand when Jehovah will assemble her that halteth, and will gather her that is driven out, and her that He hath afflicted; and He will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast off a strong nation. And Jehovah shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever. And thou, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, yea the first dominion shall come, even the kingdom to the daughter of Jerusalem. So brightly Micah (Micah 4) was given to prophesy of the flock of Israel, as in the next chapter of the Shepherd through whose sufferings alone could come such blessing and glory. Meanwhile he, the father of the twelve tribes, halted slowly in his keenly felt bereavement, who had known both to be driven out and afflicted.

But the time was not come for Him whom he too awaited, even to be smitten on the cheek, much less for the birth of that grand change when He returns in power. In that. land, which is to be the glory of all lands, through Him who will restore all things to God's glory, dwelt the desolate man. It was a lingering that presented a dismal snare to his firstborn, and, sad to say it, to the concubine of his father, the mother of his brothers Dan and Naphtali. Dinah had been a grief already; but what was that compared to the two-edged dagger that pierced his bosom? "Israel heard of it." But we are not told of a word that escaped him then. It was a grief too deep, if not for tears, for a passing burst of feeling; but his heart had sense of it when the sons gathered together round his dying bed, and he was given to tell them what would befall them at the end of days, not for the eternal scene, but for "the regeneration" and indeed before this comes. The dishonourer of his father, and in a way not even among the Gentiles that know not God, was forgiven, but lost his birthright and could have no pre-eminence either now or when God's kingdom comes for the earth, and Jesus is the head over all things heavenly as well as earthly.

The enumeration of the family is pathetic at this point in the patriarchal story. No flesh shall glory. Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord. Yet God takes pleasure in recording their names, both early and late in the O.T., and finally in the last book of the N.T., but with instructive variations. For the Bible is not only God's word, but an intensely moral book, little to be discerned by those who make mind their all.

The death of Isaac, with his great age, exceeding Abraham's, is here named, though we must bear in mind that it did not happen till Joseph was not only sold into Egypt but rose, unseen and unknown of Israel, into the seat next the throne. But here it is recounted, as the burial at Mamre brought again together the two sons in a sorrow that set aside strife. Notwithstanding the hatred which God hated was to come out afterward even to the close of the O.T. It must meet its doom in the day of Jehovah's indignation against all the nations, and His sword Shall come down on Edom, when the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, and Carmel and Sharon shall See the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of Israel's God.

÷Chapter 22. JACOB AND JOSEPH.

Genesis 37.

All thoughtful readers will understand why the purpose in hand excludes dwelling on Genesis 36 Jacob has nothing to do with the chapter. It has its own important place of sketching the earthly lot of Esau. Indirectly however it is instructive, as showing that which is natural first coming into power, afterwards what is spiritual. The family of promise remain shepherds and herdmen, wandering here and there, without the land and within it, and even grievously oppressed; while the generations of Edom rise rapidly into importance, away from Canaan, in Mount Seir. The posterity of Edom claim soon the distinction of chiefs. "These are the dukes of the sons of Esau: the sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau; duke Teman, duke Omar, duke Zepho, duke Kenaz, duke Korah, duke Gatam, duke Amalek. These are the dukes that came of Eliphaz, in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah. And these are the sons of Reuel Esau's son; duke Nahath, duke Terah, duke Shammah, duke Mizzah. These are the dukes that came of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Bashemath Esau's wife. And these are the sons of Oholibamah Esau's wife: duke Jeush, duke Jaalam, duke Korah. These are the dukes that came of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Esau, and these are their dukes: the same is Edom" (Gen 36:15-19).

Others, too, posed as grandees, the sons of Seir the Horite or cave-dweller, the inhabitant of the land, summarised in vers. 29, 30: "these are the dukes that came of the Horites: duke Lotan, duke Shobal, duke Zibeon, duke Anah, duke Dishon, duke Ezer, duke Dishan. These are the dukes that came of the Horites according to their dukes in the land of Seir."

Nor was this the acme of their development. "And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." No less than eight kings are successively traced from Bela to Hadar, though it is carefully said that we have Esau's dukes again (vers. 40-43); and so we hear in the song of Moses Exo 15:15), but "the king" in the later history.

Even in Genesis 37 it is much more the history of Joseph that now begins, typifying the Lord in humiliation, and how He fared at the hands of His brethren according to the flesh. Our present task is to mark Jacob in it.

"And Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan. These [are] Jacob's generations. Joseph, [being] seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and he [was] a lad (or, doing service) with the sons of Bilhah; and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought their evil report to his (or, their) father. And Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he [was] son of his old age; and he gave him a coat of many colours. And his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren; and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told [it] to his brethren; and they hated him yet more. And he said to them, Hear, pray, this dream which I have dreamt. And, behold, we [were] binding sheaves in the midst of the field; and, behold, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about and bowed down to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Wilt thou indeed reign over us? or wilt thou indeed rule over us? And they hated him yet more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream and told [it] to his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun, and the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to me. And he told [it] to, his father, and to his brethren. And his father rebuked him, and said to him, What' [is] this dream that thou hast dreamt? Shall indeed I and thy mother and thy brethren come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father kept the saying" (vers. 1-11).

We leave the early piety of Joseph till its own season, and the divine communications with which he was favoured even as a youth. But it falls within Jacob's history to note the special affection which bound Joseph to him, and the dress of honour which was to play a heartless and cruel part toward their father in the unscrupulous revenge on Joseph with which they answered all. Jacob, though moved by the singular honour implied in the second dream, could not but treasure up its as yet dim import. Joseph's simplicity and candour, for there was an absence of all presumption, only kindled more fiercely the spite of his brethren, which soon found occasion to vent itself in outrageous malice. How like the way of the Jews with Him who was long after to be the blessed Antitype!

"And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed [the flock] in Shechem? Come, that I may send thee to them. And he said to him, Here [am] I (or, Behold me). And he said to him, Go, pray, see after thy brethren's welfare and the flocks' welfare; and bring me word again. And he sent him out of the vale of Hebron; and he came to Shechem. And a man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, pray, where they feed. And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went to his brethren, and found them in Dothan. And they saw him afar off, and before he came near to them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another [lit. a man to his brother], Behold, this master of dreams cometh. And now come, and let us slay him, and cast him into one of the pits; and we will say, An evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard, and delivered him out of their hands, and said, Let us not take his life. And Reuben said to them, Shed no blood: cast him into this pit that [is] in the wilderness; but lay. no hand upon him (in order that he might deliver him out of their hand, to restore him to his father). And it came to pass, when Joseph was come to his brethren, that they stript Joseph of his coat, the coat of the colours that [was] on him; and they took him and cast him into the pit; and the pit [was] empty: [there was] no, water in it. And they sat down to eat bread; and they lifted up their eyes, and looked, and, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites came from Gilead; and their camels bore tragacanth and balsam and ladanum, going to carry it down to Egypt. And, Judah said to his brethren, What profit [is it] it we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand he upon him; for he [is] our brother, our flesh. And his brethren hearkened. And there passed by Midianitish men, merchants; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty silver [pieces]; and they brought Joseph into Egypt. And Reuben returned to the pit; and, behold, Joseph [was] not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned to his brethren and said, The child [is] not; and I, whither shall I go? And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a buck of the goats and dipt the coat in the blood, and they sent the coat of the colours, and they brought it to their father, and said, This have we found: know now whether it [be] thy son's coat or not. And he knew it, and said, [It is] my son's coat: an evil beast hath devoured him; - surely Joseph is torn in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons rose up, and all his daughters, to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, For I will go down to my son into Sheol mourning. And his father wept for him. And the Midianites sold him into Egypt to Potiphar, chamberlain of Pharaoh, captain of the guard" (vers. 12-36).

Jacob had yet much to learn experimentally of God as well as of himself, even though then he was disposed to have his idols. His most recent lesson was in Rachel's death, his new one prolonged it every way in Joseph her firstborn, his most loved son, not dead, it is true, as he feared, but only at length found to be risen into that exalted seat of honour which disconcerted even him when first announced. Like the Lord was Joseph in his measure, a vessel of divine wisdom in humiliation deepening into the shadow of death, rejected and scorned most by his brethren, and sold to the Gentiles: the very errand of love on which his father sent him to them furnished the opportunity for wreaking their hatred on his lowly and blameless head. How little his envious brethren could anticipate that in the approaching hour of the earth's need and distress he alone was to bear up the pillars, and deliver from death not the chosen family alone but the world of that day, and turn by his wisdom a tribulation so deep and widespread into the greater glory of the sovereign power which exalted him! More than this, as we learn later on, his brethren were to be brought down to true self-judgment and have their hearts opened to grace when he should lead them into the truth, and at last make himself known to them as their saviour, the saviour of the world too in the figure, he once humbled to the uttermost, and then highly exalted, entirely outside and above Jewish limits. But we forbear to anticipate more, even of what the history of Jacob makes known necessarily.

÷Chapter 23. TWO SONS OF JACOB CONTRASTED.

Genesis 38, 39.

As the chapters henceforth till much later refer rather to Jacob's sons than to himself, there is the less reason for dwelling on them now; they may, at least most of them, come for more particular notice under the proper head. But as they furnished not a little for the experience of Jacob also, under divine government, we may survey them by the way.

"And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a man of Adullam whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there the daughter of a Canaanitish man whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her. And she conceived and bare a son; and he called his name Er; and she again conceived and bore a Son; and She called his name Onan. And again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah; and he was at Chezib when she bore him. And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of Jehovah, and Jehovah slew him. And Judah Said to Onan, Go in to thy brother's wife, and fulfil to her the brother-in-law's duty, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed would not be his; and it came to pass when he went in to his brother's wife, that he spilled [it] on the ground, lest he should give seed to his brother. And what he did was evil in the eyes of Jehovah; and he slew him also. And Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow in thy father's house, until Shelah my son is grown; for he said, Lest he die also as his brothers. And Tamar went and remained in her father's house. And the days were multiplied when the daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died. And Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers, he and his friend Hirah, the Adullamite, to Timnah. And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold, thy father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep. And she put off from, her the garments of her widowhood, and covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gate of Enaim, which is by the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as wife. And Judah saw her, and thought her [to be] a harlot; because she had covered her face. And he turned to her by the way, and said, Come, pray, let me go in to thee; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, What, wilt thou give me that thou mayest come in to me? And he said, I will send a kid of the goats from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give a pledge until thou send [it]? And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy lace, and thy stall which [is] in thy hand. And he gave [it] to her, and came in to her; and she conceived by him. And she rose and went her way, and laid by her veil from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood. And Judah sent the kid of the goats by hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand; but he found her not. And he asked the men of her place, saying, Where [is] the prostitute (dedicated one) that [was] at Enaim by the wayside? And they said, There was no prostitute there. And he returned to Judah, and said, I have not found her; and also the men of the place said, No prostitute has been there. And Judah said, Let her take [it] to her, lest we be put to shame. Behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her. And it came to pass about three months after that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter-in-law hath played the whore; and also, behold, she is pregnant by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, that she may be burned. When she was brought forth, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, By the man to whom these [belong] I am pregnant; and she said, Acknowledge, pray, whose [are] these, the signet, and the lace, and the stall. And Judah acknowledged and said, She is more righteous than I, because I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he know her again no more. And it came to pass at the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were in her womb. And it came to pass, when she travailed,. that lone] put out [his] hand, and the midwife took and bound on his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first. And it came to pass as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? on thee [be the] breach. And they called his name Pharez (Breach). And afterward came out his brother that [had] on his hand the scarlet thread, and they called his name Zerah (Rising)" (chap. 38).

The chapter needs few words to impress its proofs of Judah's low state morally, as the next does for displaying Joseph blessed and a blessing. The name of "Jehovah," not "God" merely, is marked in both: in Genesis 38 judging the manifest violation of His will, in Genesis 39 causing him to prosper who sought to please Jehovah, and this in the most adverse circumstances, first as a slave, secondly as a prisoner, through the wickedness of Jew and Gentile. And we may notice that it is not Reuben or any other of the tribal heads, but Judah that proposed the sale of Joseph, and now evinced in his house the evil which drew down curse on curse, till its chief had to own the sad shame of Tamar, more righteous than himself who adjudged her to die by fire. Yet by this guilty Judah, and by Tamar, came He who cleanses from all sin by His blood, and will reign over the universe to God's glory, far beyond all that Joseph prefigured, as He went far lower in humiliation and suffering.

"And Joseph was brought down into Egypt; and Potiphar, a chamberlain of Pharaoh, captain of the life-guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hand of the Ishmaelites that brought him down thither. And Jehovah was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that Jehovah was with him, and that Jehovah made all which he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found favour in his eyes, and he served him; and he made him overseer over his house; and all he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time he had made him overseer in his house and over all that was his, that Jehovah blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of Jehovah was upon all that was his in house and in field. And he left all that was his in Joseph's hand, and he knew not anything with him save the bread that he ate. And Joseph was beautiful of form and beautiful of countenance. And it came to pass after these things that the wife of his master cast her eyes on Joseph, and said, Lie with me. But he refused and said to his master's wife, Behold, my master knoweth not what is with me in the house, and he hath put all that is his into my hand. None is greater in this house than I; nor hath he kept back from me anything but thee, because thou art his wife; and how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?\* And it came to pass as she spoke to Joseph day [by] day, that he hearkened not to her to lie by her [and] to be with her. And it came to pass about this time, that he went into the house to do his business; and none of the men of the house was there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me; and he left his garment in her hand and fled and ran out. And it came to pass when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled forth, that she called to the men of the house, and spoke to them, saying, See, he hath brought in a Hebrew man to mock us: he came in to me to lie with me, and I cried with a great voice. And it came to pass when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me and fled and went out. And she laid his garment by her until his lord came home. And she spoke to him, according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant whom thou hast brought to us came in to mock me; and it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me and fled forth. And it came to pass when his lord heard the words of his wife which she spoke to him, saying, According to these things thy servant did to me, that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's lord took him and put him into the tower-house, a place where the king's prisoners were bound; and he was there in the tower-house. And Jehovah was with him, and extended mercy to him, and gave him favour in the eyes of the chief of the tower-house. And the chief of the tower-house committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that [were] in the tower-house; and [of] all that they were doing there, he was the doer. The chief of the tower-house looked not to anything under his hand, because Jehovah [was] with him; and what he did Jehovah made to prosper (Genesis 39).

\*"God" here is perfectly in place. The sin was against His nature, and independent of special relationship. But it is also a striking evidence of the folly of such as fancy an Elohistic writer to account for what is due to intrinsic grounds and spiritual feeling.

It is as lovely a picture in the simple fact of grace moving under Jehovah's guidance in purity and integrity where man and woman had dealt villainously; as Judah and his house, passing from one shame to another under His chastising hand, are a serious and humbling lesson.

÷Chapter 24. JACOB'S LOWLY SON EXALTED, AND THE PROUD ABASED.

Genesis 40-45.

Here we must be brief, as we have to do, not with Jacob, but with his sons; so that a mere sketch is all that we would now attempt. As man's and his brethren's part was evil toward the righteous Joseph, God wrought in His admirable providence, and caused what they did to injure only the more to accomplish His purpose of good, as well as to set him in honour who deserved it, but had to pass from one humiliation to a worse.

First we see Joseph concerned with the unhappy looks of Pharaoh's chief cupbearer and chief baker, bound in the same prison with himself. They had each his dream, and were grieved that there was none to interpret. But Joseph, replying that this belongs to God, asks to hear, and furnishes the desired light; which was exactly verified in the death of the baker and the restoration of the cupbearer (Genesis 40). Next, Pharaoh, at the end of two full years of prison trial to Joseph, has his dreams which not all the Scribes nor the sages of Egypt could explain. This woke up the forgetful heart of the restored chamberlain who tells the king of the Hebrew youth; and he, hastily sent for from the dungeon, disclaims any source but God for the king's need. But on hearing he is equally clear that God had sent the dreams to Pharaoh, and enabled him to let Pharaoh see what He Himself was about to do. The word came so simply yet convincingly home to the king and his servants, that none was so fit to direct aright the divinely given light as he who had been the means of making it known; and at one bound Pharaoh set the captive over all the land of Egypt, next to himself on the throne. And here again the prophetic dreams were punctually fulfilled to the immense relief of suffering man (Genesis 41). Among the sufferers (Genesis 42, Genesis 43) were Jacob and his sons, all but Benjamin being sent by their father to buy the food which Joseph alone could supply. "And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him" (8). And a marvellous forecast follows of the way a greater than Joseph, first suffering from His brethren and the Gentiles, interpreter too of God's wisdom in His humiliation, and exalted to the right hand of the Highest, not only administers the richest blessing to the Gentiles, unknown to His Jewish brethren in their dark unbelief, but adopts deep and efficacious means to bring these to repentance and make Himself known as their Brother and gracious Friend in the day of His glory.

On the details, however instructive and necessary to a life of Joseph, we need not here dilate, beyond pointing out the critical part of the contrivance to make Benjamin prisoner, which drew out Judah's confession and plea at all cost to let this youngest brother return to, his father (Genesis 44). Thereon follows (in Genesis 45) Joseph making himself known to his brethren. And here we look on all as living pictures of that great event which will as surely be accomplished when all Israel shall be saved, by a distinct act of divine grace and power, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in (Rom 11:25-27). As touching the gospel the Jews are still enemies for the Gentiles' sake; for God is still working among the nations, and not at all yet in a national way with the Jews, who are still unbelieving that He who came of themselves, the rejected Messiah, is exalted on high and has long been the source of salvation and blessing to the Gentiles.

But assuredly the time is at hand when the famished Jews will be brought under His gracious hand, and after secret mercy will be brought to own that the man of God's right hand, the Son of man whom He made strong for Himself, is none other than He whom they so shamelessly rejected and forced on the Gentiles to crucify Him, who in His glory will not be ashamed to call them brethren. In order that this should be a real work in their souls, not as often of old a mere external deliverance, but truly of those written in the book and characterised by genuine faith and repentance, they must pass through a special tribulation which will be disastrous to all who having no conscience toward God become apostate. But it will be blessed greatly to those who are born of God and exercised by their most bitter experience, and at length are brought to fully judge all when they behold in His glory for their rescue and blessing Him whom they recognise as the Messiah they had pierced.

The Psalms and the prophets, as well as the prophetic part of the Revelation, to say nothing of the synoptic Gospels also, cast much light, not on the glorious change only, but on the process employed by the Lord to make Himself known to His brethren. Here tradition has been guilty of a double wrong: by appropriating to Christians all that divine light which will surely be afforded gradually and increasingly when God begins to prepare His ancient people in darkness and error and suffering through a work of grace, however ignorant at first, for the blessed and exalted place they are to have under Messiah and the new covenant in the days of the kingdom, the kingdom no longer in mystery but in manifestation. And how precious will those chapters be, when conscience is truly awakened and exercised, and light dawns surely if slowly on their souls, and the true Joseph is at length made known to His brethren! The work will not be complete, until the sins are judged in the light of His personal presence, His glory and His grace. And what type could be clearer than this Genesis 45 affords us? Does this diminish our interest and profit too in anticipating the future? Nay, nor this only; for we may see in Joseph's marriage and his sons the shadow of Christian or church blessing, while He *is* not yet at all known to His brethren as such.

How sad it is to realise, as we enjoy the various light of Christ's humiliation and glory, that the very principle of the higher criticism is nothing but withering and blinding unbelief. For if there be anything more distinctive of it than another, is it not the denial of true prophecy? And what can be more characteristic of scripture than that such simple narratives as this should be so pervaded with that light divine? Alas! it is equally blind to the heavenly light of Christ, of which His miracles were a very real though far from the highest part. For this reason *the* apostasy is worse in Christendom than in Israel, however grievous and gross this may have been.

The root of the evil lies deeper still. It is fundamental unbelief in the glory of Christ's person, to which the emptying of Himself is perverted. Decorous language is observed, in England especially, not to openly violate the Athanasian creed, along with the strongest desire to get rid of it by efforts direct and indirect. Yet enough escapes the pen and lips to convince men of any discernment, that Christ's Deity is no more accepted in reality than the plenary inspiration of the scriptures. Craft avails itself of the facts, that God or gods way be employed of men in a merely representative sense as rulers, and that divine inspiration is vulgarly and in the Prayer-book applied to what is simply natural when exhibited in a surpassing degree of excellence. But all such reasoning is a wicked and destructive cheat, when the question is of the Lord of all, and of God's word. And these unbelieving men are only hurrying on that revealed departure of Christendom from the faith of God's Christ to bring on the predicted vengeance of God on the most loathsome and detested objects of His judgment.

÷Chapter 25. ISRAEL AND HIS SONS GO DOWN INTO EGYPT.

Genesis 46, 47.

Parental affection answered in Jacob, both when he believed not for joy fainting at the news that Joseph was alive and governor over all the land of Egypt, and reviving when he said "It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive, I will go and see him before I die."

But it was not quite enough. Divine goodness wrought in his soul when he reached the southern limit of the land. "And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-Sheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here [am] I. And he said, I [am] God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up; and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes" (Gen 46:1-4).

What grace on God's part! Abram had gone down into Egypt through the pressure of famine, and sadly failed there, whatever riches he gained. Isaac too, when famine in the land might have drawn him off like his father, was expressly forbidden to go thither and enjoined to dwell in the land under the assurance of His blessing. Israel needed and had God bidding him not to fear going down there, where He would make of him a great nation, with special comfort nearer still to his heart.

The rest of the chapter from ver. 5 presents the chosen family in Pharaoh's wagons with their cattle and goods, "Jacob and all his seed with him: his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt." In the list that follows Joseph's sons are given in their due place according to Hebrew usage. "And he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to direct his face to Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself to him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said to Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou [art] yet alive" (vers. 28-30). The close of the chapter gives Joseph telling his brethren what he proposed to say to Pharaoh, that they might have Goshen to dwell in.

In Genesis 47 we have them presented to Pharaoh accordingly; and the still more interesting interview of Jacob with the king. "And Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Jacob, How old [art] thou? And Jacob said to Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage [are] a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh" (vers. 7-10).

How wondrous the grace of God toward Jacob! It was his to bless Pharaoh. Abram deceived the Pharaoh of his day and for Sarai's sake had "sheep and oxen and he-asses and men-servants and maidservants, and she-asses and camels"; and he again deceived Abimelech similarly; as did Isaac at a later day in like forgetfulness of his Almighty protector. Not so the "worm Jacob." In weakness was he made strong, and enabled to bear himself with dignity before the greatest man on the earth. Not a favour did he ask, when, we may be sure, he might have had anything. He blessed Pharaoh when he went in, and before he came out. "And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." Yet there was in this neither vanity nor pride, but a soul that had come to know divine goodness; and then a better thing was his portion than the world could confer. Besides there was treasure enough in God for Pharaoh; so that his heart overflowed on the king's behalf.

As to Joseph's administration of which the body of the chapter (11-26) treats, this is not the subject in hand. But the latter part tells us of Jacob's living in the land of Egypt seventeen years more; and the time drew nigh for Israel to die. So he called Joseph; and with the same solemnity as Abraham employed in sending Eliezer for Isaac's bride, he made Joseph not only promise but swear to carry his body out of Egypt and bury it in the burial-place of his fathers. Joseph's splendour did not in the least wean his heart from the land of promise. There would he be laid, as his spirit waited for the King of glory and the kingdom.

÷Chapter 26. JACOB BLESSING JOSEPH'S SONS.

Genesis 48.

In this chapter scenes of profound interest follow as to the dying patriarch, for his blessing on the sons of Joseph; in the next for his dying words to his own sons in general. Few words are here needed however much may be conveyed.

"And it came to pass after these things, that [one] told Joseph, Behold, thy father [is] sick. And he took with him his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. And [one] told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee; and Israel strengthened himself and sat upon the bed. And Jacob said to Joseph, The Almighty God appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me and said to me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a company of peoples; and I will give this land to thy seed after thee, an everlasting possession. And now thy two sons, who were born to thee in the land of Egypt before I came to thee into Egypt, [shall be] mine; Ephraim and Manasseh Shall be mine as Reuben and Simeon. And thy family which thou hast begotten (or, shalt beget) after them shall be thine: they shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan on the way, when yet a certain distance (way) to come to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath, that is, Bethlehem. And Israel beheld Joseph's sons and said, Who [are] these? And Joseph said to his father, They [are] my sons whom God hath given me here. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee unto me, that I may bless them. Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age — he could not see. And he brought them nearer to him; and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face; and, behold, God hath also let me see thy seed. And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and bowed down with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought [them] near to him. And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid [it] on Ephraim's head — and he [was] the younger — and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding (others, crossing) wittingly his hands, for Manasseh [was] the first-born. And he blessed Joseph and said, The God before whom walked my fathers Abraham and Isaac, the God that tended me all my life long till this day, the angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth (land). And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it was evil in his eyes; and he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, Not so, my father, for this [is] the first-born: put thy right hand on his head. But his father refused and said, I know, my son, I know: he also will become a people and he also will be great; but truly his younger brother will be greater than he; and his seed will become a fulness of nations. And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee will Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh; and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. And Israel said to Joseph, Behold, I die; and God will be with you, and bring you again to the land of your fathers. And I have given to thee one slope (shoulder) above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow" (Genesis 48).

It is well to note the peculiarity of the phrase in verse 19, not "a multitude of peoples" but "a fulness of nations." The Septuagint is lax in verse 4, where it gives "congregations of nations," (συναγωγὰς ἐθνῶν) instead of "an assembly of peoples;" but it is nearer the truth in verse 19, where it has πλῆθος ἐθνῶν, "a fulness of nations." It is notorious, that in contrast with Judah and Benjamin, who had a distinct place, all the rest of the tribes fell under Ephraim as Israel.

Such was this affecting and instructive incident: Jacob clear, where Isaac had been dim; Jacob clearer than Joseph, hitherto given beyond other men of God to be of penetrating insight into divine things. What deep self-judgment must have passed through Israel's spirit, as he reviewed the blessing once stolen by his own guile! Could not, would not, Jehovah have, somehow to His own glory without his servant's shame, have crossed Isaac's hands to make good His word of promise to Jacob? How sad not to have trusted Him!

Jacob was deceitful no more; nay he even stedfastly opposed the will of his beloved Joseph in subjection to God who directed him. What a change through His grace!

We may not pass over the reference to this chapter in Heb 11:21. Dying, Jacob was stronger in faith than in all the vigour of his life, tried and energetic as it had been. Then it was that he by faith blessed each of the sons of Joseph above nature's thoughts; as Isaac, overruled of God, blessed Jacob and Esau according to His purpose. Nor is it without force that Jacob's worshipping on the top of his staff is here mentioned, in contrast with his father's fear when he discovered his folly in striving to please himself contrary to God's word. With his staff he passed the Jordan a lonely outcast; in due time he had become two bands, though in fear of Esau's resentment, whom God had recalled to natural affection. Now, so soon to depart, he is strong in faith, adoring and giving glory to God; whilst he opens his lips as God's mouthpiece over his grandsons,

÷Chapter 27. JACOB'S LAST WORDS TO HIS SONS, His DEATH AND BURIAL.

Genesis 49, 50.

On no dying bed of the patriarchs shone light more brightly than on Jacob's. They all were prophets, and Abraham, even when faulty, was so designated to the Philistine king, who could not but see his faults; but none was given so much as Jacob to scan Israel's future.

"And Jacob called his sons and said, Gather yourselves together, and I will tell you what will befall you at the end of days. Assemble yourselves together and hear, ye sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father.

Reuben, thou [art] my first-born, my might, and the first-fruits of my vigour, excellency of dignity and excellency of strength. Bubbling up as the waters, thou shalt have no pre-eminence; because thou wentest up to thy father's couch: then defiledst thou [it]; he went up to my bed.

Simeon and Levi [are] brethren, weapons of violence their swords. My soul, come not into their council; mine honour, be not united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew men, and in their self-will houghed oxen. Cursed [be] their anger, for [it was] fierce, and their rage, for [it was] cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

Judah, thee will thy brethren praise: thy hand [will be] on the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children will bow down to thee. Judah [is] a lion's whelp. From the prey, my son, thou art gone up. he stoopeth, he coucheth as a lion, and as a lioness: who will rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and to him will be the obedience (or, gathering) of peoples. He bindeth his foal to the vine, and his ass's colt to the choice vine; he washeth his garments in wine, and his vesture in the blood of grapes; his eyes [are] red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

Zebulun shall dwell at the breach of the seas, and he [shall be] for a haven of ships; and his border [shall be] upon Zidon.

Issachar [is] a bony (or, strong) ass, couching between two hurdles; and he saw rest that [it was] good, and the land that [it was] pleasant; and he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a tributary servant.

Dan shall judge his people, as another of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a horned serpent in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider falleth backward. I wait for thy salvation, O Jehovah.

Gad — troops shall press upon him; but he shall press upon their heel.

Out of Asher his bread [shall be] fat, and he, shall yield royal dainties.

Naphthali, [is] a hind let loose; he giveth goodly words.

Joseph [is] a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a fountain; daughters (i.e. branches) shoot over the wall. The archers have provoked, and shot at and hated him; but his bow abideth firm, and the arms of his hands are supple by the hands of the mighty One of Jacob. From thence [is] the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel; from the God of thy father, He, will help thee, and from the Almighty, He will bless thee, with blessings of heaven above, with blessings of the deep that coucheth beneath, with blessings of the breast and of the womb. The blessings of thy father surpass the blessings of my progenitors unto the bounds of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.

Benjamin [is] a wolf that raveneth; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and in the evening he shall divide the spoil.

All these [are] the twelve tribes of Israel, and this [is] what their father spoke to them; and he blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them. And he charged them and said to them, I am gathered to my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that [is] in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that [is] in the field of Machpelah which [is] opposite to Mamre in the land of Canaan; which Abraham bought of Ephron the Hittite with the field for a possession of a burying-place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebecca his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the field, and of the cave that [is] in it, [was] from the children of Heth. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered his feet into the bed, and expired, and was gathered to his people."

It is sadly instructive to observe how post-apostolic tradition lost the heavenly testimony by effacing Israel's hope, and appropriating its earthly place. We need not expend words in repeating these ecclesiastical vanities of Christendom; he that would know how far they reached can find them in Bp. Chr. Wordsworth's Commentary.

The true bearing is on Israel's future. For Scripture is prophetic generally and here avowedly so, as Jacob said. It begins with Israel in the flesh, anything but the Israel of God. Reuben, Simeon, and Levi indicate ruin through corruption, and violence: the two characters of human evil from the beginning to the end of man's sad story, saddest in God's people according to privilege and responsibility. Then, in Judah, only the blind can fail to see God's purpose in Christ born of the tribe but as King (not as the glorified Head in heaven), to whom shall be the gathering of peoples; but withal the failure for the time, because Shiloh was not received of the Jews. Yet the purpose stands firm in Him who came. Next, we see Zebulun going out in commerce of sea and ships among the Gentiles; in Issachar depressions and compromises for selfish quiet as the world's slave; and in Dan, though claiming to judge, falling under Satan's power worse than idolatry; yet at this crisis a remnant looking for Jehovah's salvation. Thereon the oppressed rises to press an oppressor, as shown by Gad; while Asher points out Israel's enjoyment of their proper blessings; and Naphthali, freedom in a gracious witness for God. The whole rises to the fitting climax in Joseph, after being separated from his brethren and exalted to a wider and loftier sphere, bringing in abundant and unfailing blessing clearly identified with the true Shepherd, the Stone of Israel once sorely wounded, but flowing forth over all enclosures: blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep beneath, blessings of the race and the creature, blessings beyond bound and comparison, centring in Him Who is worthy. And with Joseph goes Benjamin, the son of his father's right hand, when power in Israel will put down every rival and share the spoil. Thus is Israel to be blessed and exalted, because in faith under Messiah and the new covenant at the end of days.

As Genesis 49 ends with Jacob's death, the closing chapter (Genesis 50) tells us of his sons carrying him to the field of Machpelah in Canaan, where his fathers were buried: a grievous mourning in the eyes of the people of the land. What a difference for those conversant with Christ glorified in heaven when they "not of the world" depart to be with Him!