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## An Exposition of Isaiah xxiv.-xxvii.

### VI.

[CONCLUDING ARTICLE.]

#### THE CHOSEN PEOPLE (CHAP. xxvii. 6-13).

THE great prophecy draws towards its close. Words of promise and of peace have been spoken to all nations, the last word of Jehovah shall be a message to the Chosen People.

*In days to come shall Jacob take root. Israel shall blossom and bud; and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit.*

Surely the "days to come" can be no other than those when the whole earth has become a vineyard of Jehovah; and the promise is that in those days "The Nation" shall not lose its identity and its peculiarity.

At the time when the prophet received the revelation "the vengeance of the covenant" had already fallen upon Jacob. The vine which God brought out of Egypt and planted in the land of promise, which took deep root and filled the land, had already been "plucked up from off it" in the whole northern kingdom.<sup>1</sup> There had also been a tearing at the roots of the southern kingdom.<sup>2</sup> The Scripture history relates that Sennacherib came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them, and that the country was desolated by strangers until Zion was left as a very small remnant.<sup>3</sup> Sennacherib himself claims to have carried captive 200,000 men of Judah. But the prophet had been commissioned to declare that "the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward,"<sup>4</sup> for the final uprooting was not yet, nor was it to take place through the instrumentality of Assyria, but through Babylon. And the same prophet who foretold this was commissioned to declare a re-planting after that uprooting, a glad return from Babylon in due time, and an assured future for Israel.<sup>5</sup> In the course of the present prophecy we have heard already of singers in the land of Judah, and that in that day the nation will be increased, and its borders enlarged; here we read that it will be like a vine deeply rooted in its own

<sup>1</sup> See Deut. xxviii. 63; xxix. 28; Ps. lxxx. 8-11; cf. 1 Kings xiv. 15.

<sup>2</sup> If this prophecy was so late as the close of Hezekiah's reign.

<sup>3</sup> xxxvi. 1; i. 2-9. <sup>4</sup> xxxvii. 31.

<sup>5</sup> xxxix. 6, 7, 40-66.

congenial soil, which shall not be plucked up any more for ever.<sup>1</sup>

“ And Israel shall blossom and bud ” ; at its head the Branch of Jehovah in beauty and in glory, the fruit of its land excellent and comely for those that are escaped of Israel, while the people themselves are a people holy, and washed, and purged, and near to the manifested glory.<sup>2</sup>

“ And they shall fill the face of the world with fruit ” ; for the experiences of Israel are ever in trust for the world. They were chosen in the first instance that all nations should be blessed through them ; even their temporary rejection became the occasion for reconciling the world to God ; and their being received back into the Divine favour will be to the nations like life from the dead.<sup>3</sup>

The gifts and calling of God are without repentance ; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. This nation, once set apart for the fulfilment of Divine purposes in the world, will maintain its peculiarity to the end. “ Thus saith Jehovah, Who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night, Who stirreth up the sea, so that the waves thereof roar ; Jehovah of hosts is His Name ; if these ordinances depart from before Me, saith Jehovah, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me for ever. Thus saith Jehovah ; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, saith Jehovah.”<sup>4</sup>

It is this phenomenon of the world's history which our prophet here proclaims, now in inspired reverie upon the vision presented to his mind, now again in the language of prediction.<sup>5</sup> His look is still mainly towards the future, although not, perhaps, in his opening sentences, without a glance backward also into the past.

*Hath He smitten them as He smote those that smote them ? Or are they slain according to the slaughter of their slain ?<sup>5</sup> In measure, when Thou sendest them away, Thou dost contend with them ; He hath removed them with His rough blast in the day of the east wind.*

The Hebrew is difficult, and translations may vary, but the general meaning is clear. The prophet is emphasizing the peculiar Providence which watches over Israel. He may be thinking of Assyria, whom God had employed to smite His erring people, and of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jer. xxxi. 27-40 ; xxxii. 41.

<sup>2</sup> iv. 2-6.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xi. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Jer. xxxi. 35-37.

<sup>5</sup> This is the marginal rendering, and yields a clear sense.

whose overthrow when the work was done he had been forewarned ;<sup>1</sup> or of Babylon, prepared for the coming chastisement of Judah, but equally foredoomed to destruction entire and final.<sup>2</sup> Do there rise also before him, as once before in his great vision of the glory of the Christ, those later sins of Israel when they should reject the messenger of Jehovah, and their hearts should become hardened, and their land desolate, and their remnants be eaten up, while yet an imperishable stock remained ?<sup>3</sup> Of all these things the prophet may have received a sight, concentrated as it were into one intense intuition of the peculiar people, visited " seven times " for their iniquities,<sup>4</sup> smitten and slain, and yet not with the total eclipse of those nations who smote and slew them, not like Egypt, and Assyria and Babylon and Rome and a world of persecuting Powers. Jehovah sends Israel away again and yet again<sup>5</sup> ; He contends with them ; His rough blast scatters<sup>6</sup> them or dries them up,<sup>7</sup> like the east wind from the wilderness scorching the herbage in Judæa<sup>8</sup> and raging over the Western Sea,<sup>9</sup> but all is in measure, carefully weighed and apportioned, for a peculiar Providence watches over Jacob to the end.<sup>10</sup>

*Therefore, because of this special Providence, by this shall the iniquity of Jacob be forgiven ; and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin, that he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, so that the Asherim and the sun-images shall rise no more.*

Here the prophet, abandoning reverie, speaks again in the language of prediction. By this continual chastisement and constant preservation the iniquity of Jacob shall—in the final issue—be forgiven ; not surely by this as the meriting cause, but by this as the foredestined avenue of approach, and as the necessary preliminary condition. When Israel's sin is forgiven and taken away it will be by the same means that the prophet's was removed ;<sup>11</sup> in response to their cry of confession and contrition, and by the touch of a live coal from the altar of sacrifice, the sight and the knowledge of Him Who bore their iniquities in His own Body on the tree.<sup>12</sup> And towards this happy consummation, by the path of " the spirit of justice and the spirit of burning " Israel is being infallibly led.<sup>13</sup> The words of this promise, accordingly, taken from

<sup>1</sup> x. 5-27.<sup>2</sup> xiii. 19, 20.<sup>3</sup> vi. 8-12.<sup>4</sup> Amos iii. 2.<sup>5</sup> xxvi. 15 marg.<sup>6</sup> Jer. xviii. 17.<sup>7</sup> Ezek. xvii. 10 ; xix. 12.<sup>8</sup> Hosea xiii. 5.<sup>9</sup> Ezek. xxvii. 26.<sup>10</sup> Cf. Amos ix. 7-10.<sup>11</sup> vi. 6, 7.<sup>12</sup> liii. 11 ; Zech. xii. 10-xiii. 1.<sup>13</sup> iv. 3, 4.

the Septuagint version, are adopted by St. Paul and woven into his promise of the future,

There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer ;  
He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob,  
And this is my covenant with them  
When *I shall take away their sins.*<sup>1</sup>

For this is indeed the assured promise of Jehovah to Israel, " I shall take away their sins."

And this taking away of Israel's sins includes more than mere remission. It is the first step in turning away ungodliness from Jacob ; it carries with it the gift of a new heart. This is all the fruit of taking away his sin, namely that Israel, or, which is essentially the same thing, Jehovah in Israel (for from Jehovah is his fruit found), makes all the stones of the altar as chalk-stones that are beaten in sunder ; the altar of their sin, the work of their hands, shall for ever be pulverized ; that which their fingers have made, the Asherim and the sun-images, shall rise no more.<sup>2</sup>

That tendency of Israel to idolatry, which in Isaiah's day must have seemed ineradicable, was remarkably uprooted by the experiences of the Captivity and of the Return. But when Israel rejected their Messiah, and refused Him admission to their hearts, the unclean spirit of idolatry returned with seven-fold reinforcement to his house.<sup>3</sup> Manifold forms of gross superstition, and the cult of human tradition, possessed the nation ; the Talmud, the work of their own hands, replaced the commandments of God. And there is reason to believe that in the last days Jacob, no less than the nations, will have built themselves a lofty city to dwell on high,<sup>4</sup> that which their fingers have made instead of the refuge of the Rock of Ages. But " this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, saith Jehovah ; I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it ; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother saying, know Jehovah ; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah ; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more."<sup>5</sup> This then will be the fruit of their forgiveness in that day, total abolition for ever of

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 26, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. xvii. 5 with Exod. xx. 4, 24, 25.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xii. 38-45.

<sup>4</sup> xxvi. 5, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

all other allegiances or reliances, and an inward adhesion to Jehovah.

But while forgiveness of their sins, and the taking away of their sinful ways, finally and for ever, awaits Israel in the latter day, before these blessings are bestowed the nation must first be scattered, and its vitality checked.

The prophet sees the future, and declares what he sees—

*For the fortified city is solitary, a habitation deserted and forsaken, like the wilderness ; there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof.*

The picture is of a once populous land denuded of its inhabitants, with grass and shrubs growing on the sites of its cities. And so it has happened to the land once and again <sup>1</sup>; and so it is to-day with most of the once numerous fortified cities of Israel; their very sites unrecognizable, and to be recovered only by diligent search.

*When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off ; the women shall come and set them on fire.*

The picture is changed from the land to the people; the people are a tree whose boughs wither; the east wind of the Divine sentence <sup>2</sup> has touched them, and their boughs have utterly withered <sup>3</sup>; they shall be broken off, and the women searching for fuel shall gather them and burn them with fire.

*For it is a people of no understanding ; therefore He that made them will not have compassion upon them, and He that formed them will show them no favour.*

Because they knew not the time of their visitation; because when the Messenger of the Covenant would have gathered them to His embrace, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, they would not; because they recognized Him not, nor understood the voices of the prophets read in their synagogues every Sabbath day. Therefore He that made them will not have compassion on them, and He that formed them will show them no favour. Therefore the fig tree with leaves but without fruit dried up from its roots; therefore the green tree swiftly became dry; therefore the olive branches were broken off; therefore they were burned in the fire, when their house was made desolate, given with their whole city to the flames in one tremendous catastrophe, and not one

<sup>1</sup> Micah iii. 12; Lam. i. 4; v. 18.

<sup>2</sup> vi. 10; xxix. 13, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ezek. xvii. 10.

stone left upon another that was not thrown down. Therefore to this day God gives to His own people a spirit of stupor, while the nations obtain mercy.<sup>1</sup>

By this path then must Israel pass to her hour of forgiveness and of purification. It is because of her own want of spiritual understanding indeed, and of her own wilful rebellion, but it is also as Jehovah had already declared in vision through Isaiah, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.<sup>2</sup> They could not believe because by the mouth of His prophet Jehovah had spoken it.<sup>3</sup>

There is mystery here ; we neither deny the fact of a mystery nor demand its explanation. We are being admitted into the counsels of Him Who is perfect in understanding and Whose Name is Love ; and He assures us that " by this " means the iniquity of Jacob shall be forgiven, and that his entire consecration to Jehovah will be the fruit of that forgiveness. For if God has shut up all unto disobedience, it is that He might have mercy on all.

Let us then take no rest till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth,<sup>4</sup> and let us join the Apostle in his adoring praise.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out.<sup>5</sup>

*And it shall come to pass in that day that Jehovah will beat off His fruit from the flood of the River unto the brook of Egypt ; and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.*

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet shall be blown ; and they shall come that were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and they that were outcasts in the land of Egypt ; and they shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.*

Jehovah's last words are promises of blessing to His Chosen. There is much that is mysterious in them, but their whole tone is of mercy ; ye shall be gathered, O children of Israel ; ye shall come and worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

The River Euphrates and El Arish, the brook of Egypt, marked the northern and southern boundaries respectively of the land promised to Abraham.<sup>6</sup> This promise, often repeated, and for a short time in the reign of Solomon actually realised, has never been

<sup>1</sup> Luke xix. 41-44 ; Matt. xxiii. 37 ; Acts xiii. 27 ; Matt. xxi. 19 ; Luke xxiii. 31 ; Rom. xi. 19 ; xi. 5.

<sup>2</sup> vi. 9-13 ; Acts ii. 23 ; iii. 27.

<sup>3</sup> John xii. 39-41.

<sup>4</sup> lxii. 6, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. xi. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Gen. xv. 18.

revoked. This passage may suggest that in that day the River and the Brook shall still mark the extreme limits of the Holy Land. But an earlier utterance of the prophet has shown that in that day the nation will be increased, and also, if the Hebrew is indeed to be so rendered, that all the borders of the land will be enlarged.<sup>1</sup> Whether the enlargement refers to the original borders of the land, as covenanted to Abraham, or to the actual borders in the times of the kings, however, still remains uncertain. On the whole we shall probably be nearer to the intention of the Divine Author of these predictions if we take the localities here mentioned in a representative sense.

In Isaiah's day the phrase "from the flood of the River unto the brook of Egypt" would represent the whole covenanted possession of the chosen people, and in that sense accordingly we take it in this prediction of the future. In one part of the prophecy, where the manifested presence of Jehovah in Zion and Jerusalem is specially in view, this possession is naturally termed "the land of Judah"<sup>2</sup>; while in this place, where the whole extent of the country inhabited by Israel is the prominent thought, it is defined by the boundaries of immemorial promise.

In Isaiah's day again, immediately beyond these boundaries of promise, there lay, on the North, Assyria; and on the South, Egypt. We think then that these two nations stand, in this prediction, as also perhaps in an earlier prediction,<sup>3</sup> as representative of the outside nations of the world.

With this understanding of the geographical references, the prediction appears to contain a warning and a promise.

The recovery of Israel in that day within all the borders of their land, where it is assumed they will then be established, will not be so co-extensive with the nation as not to take regard of the individual. It is Jehovah's fruit alone, beaten off by Himself, that will be garnered, by individual, spiritual conversion; "ye shall be gathered one by one."

But if it is individual, it is to be none the less national, on a scale large and generous. Its effect will be felt by the nation through all the world. A great trumpet shall be blown, its peal vibrating through all lands, and they shall come to dwell in the land, and

<sup>1</sup> xxvi. 15.<sup>2</sup> xxvi. 1.<sup>3</sup> xix. 24.

swell the members of redeemed Israel, and above all to worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

So far perhaps we can now see into the meaning of these predictions, but the day alone will declare their full content.

May the Lord hasten it in its time!

### TO-DAY.

The Vision has gone up from the prophet; his inspired utterance is at an end; his pen, or that of his amanuensis,<sup>1</sup> is laid down; the record alone remains, for himself and for his contemporaries first of all, and then in due time to be reverently transcribed by the prophet himself, with those other men of Hezekiah,<sup>2</sup> in the completed volume of The Vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz.

This Vision, like so many Divine revelations of the future, is without marks of time. The final indignation is to last "for a little moment," the imprisonment of the host of the height and of the kings of the earth is to be for "many days," after which they shall be "visited," each in his time.<sup>3</sup> But as to the years, many or few, that should elapse before that indignation fell, and the duration of the preliminary travail of Earth or Church or Israelite nation, and of the glories that should follow, and many another question of "time and manner of time" the Revealer did not show anything, and the Spirit within the prophet had no utterance. We can picture him as enquiring, with a later prophet, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? St. Peter has told us<sup>4</sup> that such inquiry was indeed made by the prophets and received an answer. It has revealed to them that not to themselves, but to us, disciples of Christ in the world's latter days, they ministered these things. For themselves, nay even for the holy angels who were listening, the words were shut up and sealed.<sup>5</sup>

But this is not to assert that for the prophet and his contemporaries the Vision carried no message. The prophet himself had the lasting possession of a great spiritual experience. Jehovah had spoken by him. The words which his lips had uttered, now enshrined in the imperishable page, were not his own; his mind had been informed, his eloquence enlarged, by a Power which he

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jer. xxxvi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Prov. xxv. 1.

<sup>3</sup> xxxvi. 20; xxiv. 22; cf. Rev. xx. 3, 5, 10, 12.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. i. 10-12.

<sup>5</sup> Dan. xii. 8, 9; cf. viii. 16 (?).

knew to be not of himself but of God. And the prophet must have been immensely strengthened for his ministry by the experience.<sup>1</sup>

The vision was also an important part of the prophet's witness. However obscure their reference, the words cannot fail to have enforced Isaiah's message to the men of his day. One thing was clear at least from them, that to do righteousness and wait for Jehovah was the true safety and glory of Israel. And this was the sum of Isaiah's message. Jehovah of hosts, Him shall ye sanctify ; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread ; wait patiently for Him.

But it still remains true that the words were not so much for Isaiah's age, as for the Christian era ; and perhaps in a very special degree for the close of that era. It is some 1900 years now since Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, and since He ascended into heaven with a promise of return. With that Return are bound up the Christian's hopes for himself, and for the world ; and to many expectant minds signs of its near approach are multiplying around us to-day. If the Return indeed be near, we may expect to find that this vision is for us in a very special sense. Let us see whether this is so or not.

The world which the prophet saw was a world united in its experiences. In the moral and spiritual sphere, the peculiar prerogative of Israel<sup>2</sup> in its inheritance of the laws and statutes and covenant of God had become the common possession of the world, and the world had widely rejected its claims. A general inability to see the majesty of Jehovah characterizes all nations. In the political sphere, while separate nations exist, they tend to form one people, one city, one commonwealth. The resultant display of power seems irresistible. It threatens to overbear those whose confidence is still in the unseen. Men buy and sell, plant and build ; the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe and wine are in their feasts. It seems no loss, but rather added liberty not to regard Jehovah and the work of His hands.

But into this commonwealth and busy world of civilization intrudes a rumour and a fear. Round about it are set by unseen hands both pits and snares. Startled by the fear, men fall into the pit ; struggling out of the pit, they become involved in a snare.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Micah iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iii. 1, 2 ; ix. 4, 5.

Troubles fall upon it as it were from the void, not one but many ; the foundations of its order give way ; decay shows itself through all the fabric.

So in the prophet's vision : and to-day our common civilization overspreads the world : distance is annihilated ; all nations are inextricably interconnected, and each, in due course, by developing resources and progressive efficiency, becomes a power ; so that a league of nations to organize and protect advancing civilization becomes an imperative need. Meanwhile the claims of revealed religion are everywhere made known, while it is scarcely an exaggeration to say, as has been said, that an almost universal indifference to dogmatic and organised religion marks the civilized world. Its trammels are cast aside ; its ethics may be patronized, but its sanctions are repudiated. To-day also treacherous dealers deal more treacherously than ever, and a great fear for the future of civilization has seized the world. The future, after four years of wasting war, still hangs in the balance. The fear may be escaped, but after-war problems are sure to present many a pit and many a snare, on one side or the other. Calamity follows calamity, and all stability in human concerns seems at an end. The flowers and fruits of civilization are faded, and fallen from the tree ; the pleasures of modern life languish and fade away, they are turned to mourning. Are these indeed then those last staggering steps of a sin-laden world which the prophet saw, as it stumbled towards its fall ? The resemblance is close enough to call for earnest attention.

Let us then attend to what the vision has to say.

The Vision warns us of the fact of Satan. He after all is the prime mover in the world's rebellion, higher than men's highest, deeper than men's deepest. Men may raise their fortress towers, but he is already in the height before them. Men may contrive and plan, but his snares are ready to entrap them. He, like leviathan, is neither the handiwork, nor the companion, nor the servant of men. He is an independent spiritual personality, controlling a spirit host, mightier than the mightiest of men, prouder than the proudest, master of treachery, author of craft, the enemy of all righteousness. This is an impalpable Force working for evil, which, in reliance upon Divine power, we may resist, but which cannot, under our present conditions, be removed.

Let us not then be led astray by vain hopes. Men may tell us that mankind is steadily progressing, fighting its way upwards to fuller knowledge and an ampler life. The golden age is ever to be its goal, to be reached only by a long evolutionary process, by a developing education and civilization, by increased realization of the essential brotherhood of man, by gathering into one rich treasury for the benefit of all the race the fulness of human life and thought and experience in every nation. Or again, there is held up the prospect of a Catholic unity in religion, which shall unite all spiritual experiences of the Church of Christ, and focus its energies upon the regeneration of all the complex life of men ; a call to Christendom to arise in its united strength, and in the power of its spiritual endowment to make anew the world.

But all this takes no count of the great Enemy, nor of a natural hostility in the human heart towards God. Not so, if we take this Vision for our guide, will the golden year come in. There can be no development which shall be continuous without the blessing of Jehovah. His blessing will not rest, but a curse instead, where men turn their backs upon His revelation ; progress along such lines is progress towards catastrophe. As a matter of fact, the Vision tells us, men of the world will stand erect to the end in their opposition to God ; His people will not effect the salvation of the world. They will never surrender their aim, nor relax their endeavour to deliver the earth from its manifold distresses due to sin, and to bring men into allegiance to their Maker and Redeemer. But neither will they be misled by vain hopes which have no basis in the Divine promise. In this way, and in this way only, shall we be braced for the final pains, as we " draw near to the time of our delivery " ; if so be indeed that it is we who are called to that high and last endurance.

Ah, and sad indeed that the word of warning should be necessary within the Church of Christ ! but necessary it is, to recall ourselves to a due reverence for the laws and the statutes and the covenant of God. Take the prophet's words as we will, they must include a reference to the written Word of God ; indeed this must, by every canon of interpretation, be their primary reference. When Isaiah spoke, the long drawn out preparation of the Book of Jehovah <sup>1</sup> was already far advanced. Once before the prophet had directed

<sup>1</sup> xxxiv. 16.

men "to the law and to the testimony" for oracles of God.<sup>1</sup> But we are not here listening to the language of Isaiah on the Scriptures of his day, but to utterances of the Spirit regarding the latter days; and He tells us of laws and statutes and an everlasting covenant in possession then of all the world. What can this be but the Spirit's own gift to the world, the Old and New Testaments of our Bible? And if so, let us note the fact that these laws are intended to be kept, these statutes held sacred, this covenant preserved inviolate up to the end. But it is not too much to say that over large tracts of the Christian Church to-day these Holy Scriptures have been dethroned from their pre-eminent position. Especially are they denied *authority* over the minds of men. Their ethical and religious value is conceded, but their authority is denied. It is a short step from this to their violation. Whenever hostile influences are strong, either of inclination or of broadening custom, it is the next and the only logical step.

Shall we, for our individual life and walk, dare to depart from these rules in thought and conduct, in belief and practice? Shall we, as we strive for the deliverance of the world, minimise the authority of those Divine Writings, whose violation shall draw down upon the world its final curse? Far be it from us, and may God forgive us for the past. Most of all shall we hold fast to the everlasting covenant, remembering that it is everlasting. For us at least, and in trust for the world, the Covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, the Gospel of God's Son, the glory of the sacred Blood shedding, shall be kept in memory, and proclaimed by every power of lip and of life everlastingly, up to the end.

And we shall mark what is here said of the poor and the needy. Can it be that the child-races of the world, even the untutored savage, aware only of his dependence upon unseen powers, may be more fit to inherit the earth than the man who has seen some way into the secrets of nature and ignores his Maker? The materialist philosopher may be more hopeless stock for a renewed humanity than the ignorant but yet religious heathen. But at all events, if it is the poor and needy who shall inherit the earth, we shall not unduly exalt the achievements of men in science and art, or in any branch of human endeavour, irrespective of their recognition or non-recognition of the Almighty. We shall rather fear greatly

<sup>1</sup> viii. 19, 20.

all progress which has not its root deep planted in the fear of God. And for ourselves we shall cultivate a spirit of dependence. We shall seek to be poor in spirit, by an habitual submission to the Word and will of God, and a continual acknowledgment of His providence and rule.<sup>1</sup> We shall declare plainly that our faith and hope are both in God.

And we shall do this in no pharisaic spirit of superiority to others, but with a deep sense of our creaturely dependence, and of the comparative failure of our best endeavours. But we shall not rest in our own salvation or let seeming failure excuse inaction. We shall recognise that to share in the coming kingdom, it is necessary first to take part in the present conflict. The burden of a great enterprise is laid upon us. The world must be delivered, and we must work for its deliverance. The conflict with its hostile spirit must be maintained, and we must maintain it. Only to those who bear this burden, and travail with these pains, will it be granted in that new morning of the world to awake from the dust, to arise and sing.

So then we shall live and work, not by ourselves, but by the Lord ; not for ourselves, but for the world ; unanxious about the result, for Jehovah Himself works all our works for us, and will bring all to full fruition.

And lastly we shall remember with special and reverent affection that Nation, of whom as concerning the flesh our Christ has come, and that Holy Land, where His holy feet walked in days gone by, and where He is yet to be manifested in glory. To-day both land and people fill a large place in the public eye. Let them also fill a large place in the Christian's heart, not merely as a question of world-politics, but much more because of Jehovah's manifested purpose. He knows that there is a golden future still for Israel, in the Land of Promise. He longs now to lead the Jew to the knowledge and faith of his Redeemer ; he prays for the fulfilment of all that has been written concerning him ; and he waits for their consolation and the restoration of the kingdom to Israel.

With the light of that happy Day, which shall be to the whole world like life from the dead, still in our eyes, we close our study. Whether it be near or far, one duty and one fact emerge. The duty is to fear God and to keep His commandments, for this is the

<sup>1</sup> James iv. 15.

whole duty of man. And the fact is that which always stands true, but in that day will become clear to every eye, that "of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things"; to Whom then be the glory, and not to men, now and for ever. Amen.

W. S. MOULE.



### Preparation for Holy Communion.

"THE preparation is mainly a matter of daily experience, for the Gospel is the good news of the Divine Saviour Who wishes to be your Friend and Companion all the days and all through the day. It is as you cultivate the will to remember, trust, and follow Him to-day, that you are preparing yourself for the Feast. It is as you can get to know more of Him during this week, that you are preparing yourself for the joyous experience of the coming Sunday.

"There will be, then, daily companionship and intercourse, sought for at the fixed morning and evening hours, not with the idea that the experience will be confined to those times, but in order that it may be the more readily enjoyed at any time. For, remember, the Lord is always with us; His promise is that, if we love Him, He will come and make His abode in us. And this means that, without uttering any words, or changing our posture or occupation, we can speak to Him and seek His help.

"The Holy Communion would become a hindrance rather than a help, if we were to think that the Presence of the Lord could only be fully enjoyed at that service. Such a conception would rob the Gospel of the central truth upon which its power depends, the truth of the ever-present Saviour and Friend.

"It is this faith in the ever-present Lord that is the breath of the spiritual life. Cultivate that, and you are ready to join in the Holy Communion at any time, as surely as you are ready to remember and feed on the Lord at any time."

From *At the King's Table*, by ARTHUR J. TAIT, D.D. (S.P.C.K., 1s. 3d. net).