

thirteenth dynasties. The period, therefore, to which the settlement goes back, will be roughly 2500-2000 B.C., before the Hyksos invasion of Egypt. At last a chronological starting-point for the archæology of Canaan has thus been discovered, and we can form some idea of the age to which the Amorite occupation of the country must reach back.

The fifth settlement is that of a population which used not only bronze but also iron. We may accordingly assign it to the period which lasted from the time of the eighteenth Egyptian dynasty down to the reign of Solomon. It is distinguished by what has been called the 'lamp and bowl' pottery, and is the last settlement in the eastern mound. In the central mound, however, two more periods are represented. The first is that which is characterized by the jar-handles inscribed

with Phœnician letters which belong to the age of the Jewish kings, while the second brings us down to the Persian epoch. Among other objects it has yielded is an inscription mentioning the Egyptian king Nef-aa-rut I. (339 B.C.). Naturally, iron takes the place of bronze in both these latter periods.

The Tel el-Amarna correspondence was carried on in the age of the fifth settlement, and we may therefore expect that cuneiform tablets will be discovered among its remains, probably in the western mound. This, too, must have been the settlement which witnessed the Israelitish invasion of Canaan, and perhaps the delivery of the city by the Pharaoh to Solomon. Here, at Gezer, consequently, if anywhere, we should find the answer to the question: When and how was the Phœnician alphabet brought to Israel?

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## The Great Convocation.

BY THE LATE REV. W. A. GRAY, ELGIN.

IN this great passage (and in all Scripture there is scarcely a greater or a grander) the intention of the writer is to strengthen and to stimulate the Hebrew Christians, who were under special temptations to apostatize. Many of these Christians had to fight their battle and maintain their testimony all alone, deprived of human sympathy and deprived of human aid. It was a new and a trying experience, taxing to their perseverance and testing to their faith, and, as I say, the apostle takes account of it while he writes. Already in this chapter, he had directed them to one great ground of support. He had directed them to Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith. He had reminded them of His cruel contradiction. He had reminded them of His bitter cross. And he had incited them to courage in their own trials by the thought of the greater severity of His. And now in the verses before us, he passes

'But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.'—Heb. xii. 22, 23.

to another ground of support, passes from the idea of a past example to the idea of a present society. And he unveils for these Hebrew Christians—all so lonely as they thought themselves—the great and goodly fellowship they belonged to. What though an infidel world might scoff? They had the presence and assistance of a multitude who were not of this world, with whom their hearts and their aims were one. Greater were they that were for them than all they that were against them. No one believer, amidst all the scattered elect, need find himself solitary. However remote his post, however desolate his lot, he was encircled with a countless host, who sought what he sought, felt what he felt, loved what he loved. A thought, a prayer, a silent withdrawal within himself, and he was one on the instant with the throngs that surrounded him, included in their shining ranks, sharing in their sacred privileges. Consider then

two subjects: (1) the place of assembly, and (2) the component parts of the assembly itself.

1. First, then, the place of assembly. 'Ye are come,' says the apostle, 'to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.' The words are suggestive of a contrast. And a contrast with what? With Mount Sinai, of which the writer has been speaking just before. 'Put these two together,' he says; 'look on this picture and on that, and see the difference between them.'

There is a difference as to *aspect*. As to Mount Sinai, it is threatening and dark, with the thunder-cloud resting black on its brow and the lightning playing red on its crags. As for Mount Zion, it is tranquil and bright, standing bare in the shadowless sunshine of God.

There is a difference in the next place as to *occupation*. As for Mount Sinai, it is desolate and bleak, rising high in the lone clay tracts of the wilderness. As for Mount Zion, it is populous and busy, the towers of a city adorning its slopes, the streets of a city encircling its sides, while a river flows down in the midst of it, whose falling waters make it glad.

There is a difference, too, as to *accessibility*. As for Mount Sinai, it is forbidding and repellent, —fenced by barriers, protected by warnings. As for Mount Zion, it is unrestricted and free. Its gates are continually open. Its paths are everywhere wide. Whosoever will, may drink of its living waters, and he who does the commandments of its King, shall have a right to its Tree of Life.

Such are the differences described. And, for the Hebrews addressed, what did they mean? They meant all the distinction between Law and Gospel—legal threats and gospel promises, legal isolation and gospel companionship, legal bondage and gospel liberty. And they mean the same things for us,—the distinction between a God that is known in law and a God that is known in grace. For as often as the change is made from a state of conviction by the law to a state of reconciliation by grace, so often is a change made like the change made here, from the shadow of Mount Sinai that genders to bondage, to the brightness and beauty of Jerusalem above, which is the mother of us all, with its solemn troops and sweet societies, made up of the blood-washed

and forgiven. Is it not a great thought this, of the kingdom of God as a city—carried on through Old Testament prophecy and echoed and expanded in New Testament experience,—this radiant vision of prosperity and peace, that dawned on Israel, grew brighter to Paul and John, and fired the minds and inspired the songs of confessors and martyrs thereafter, as often as loneliness depressed or persecution assailed? And still, amidst all the dividings of space and creed, and the still more mysterious dividings of death, the thought is the one thing that cheers. It is true that one-half of the city lies up towards the top. There they see God face to face. There they serve God day and night. There the song is louder. There the robes are purer and more white. Yet the city after all is one. Down from the shining heights sweeps the same great rampart, with its walls of salvation and its gates of praise, winding down through the lowlier suburbs of earth, and encircling in its strong stout arm the path of many a weary climber, whose way is lonely and whose heart is faint. So the boundary line between here and yonder is obliterated. The partition wall between time and eternity is broken down. And as in Christ there is neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither bond nor free, so in Christ there is neither earth nor heaven, for both have become one.

2. But pass in the next place to the component parts of the assembly itself. What, let us ask, are these?

(1) First the Angels. We are come, says the writer, to an innumerable company of angels. We are with them in sympathy, with them in touch.

Angels—the fellowship of angels. Is it not strange that a doctrine so clearly laid stress on in Scripture, yes, and we may also say, consistent with religious philosophy, as the doctrine of angels, is it not strange that that doctrine has so little real hold on us? For it is most scriptural. All through the sacred history, from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is full of them—the glimmer of their garments, the rustle of their wings. Why this unconsciousness of privilege? Why this indifference to facts? Is it the idea, present though unexpressed, that though association with the angels existed once, it exists no longer now? We live in a world more dull. We travel in

ways more prosaic. Is that the impression of some? But when did the change take place? The fact is, the teaching of Scripture is all the other way. Instead of the interposition of angels diminishing with gospel institutions and with gospel light, the promise is that it will be more closely intimate, more tenderly and richly complete. 'Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man.' And not only on the Son of Man, but on those that are heirs of His great salvation. 'So,' says the apostle, 'we in these last gospel times are come to the angels.' We are come to them now more than ever. Yes, and we are come for evermore.

'But we cannot see them,' so says another who doubts. 'We cannot see them.' And science that ransacks the universe makes it certain they are not there to be seen. In the farthest nooks, through all the subtlest ether, it has not detected an angel,—not the vanishing train of an angel's garment, not the lingering echo of an angel's voice.

But what has science got to do with the matter? Can the material reveal the immaterial, the instruments of sense the realities of spirit? There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. The telescope reveals the worlds. But the God that has made the worlds, what telescope has ever shown the image of Him? The scalpel reveals the tissues. But the life that quickens the tissues, what scalpel has ever pierced to that? And yet there is science and science, and it is not so long since I read the words of a scientific man, who declared that even from a scientific point of view he could conceive of places to be filled and of functions to be exercised by the angels. 'But,' you say, 'I cannot individualize them, associate them with their separate personalities, assign them their special characters. If I could, I would think of them oftener. As it is, they are so alike, massed together like the midnight star dust that illumines the far-off sky.' Is that what you feel? Ah, but even among these there are distinctions, and one star differs from another star in glory. Just so with the angels. View the firmament of Scripture and you will find that the angels differ also. Yes, and they differ to such an extent that you may make this one or that one the object of your special contemplation, this one or that one the

recipient of your special love. 'Which of the angels would you most like to see?' So said a profound theologian, who thought much and talked much on the deep things of grace. I mean the late Professor Duncan of Edinburgh. 'I know,' he continued, 'which *I* want to see.' 'Tell me,' said his hearer. The answer was profound and impressive. 'Not Michael, the angel of zeal—zeal for God's glory; not Gabriel, the angel of announcement—announcement of God's purpose. No, but the angel that strengthened Christ in His agony,—the gratitude of a world to *him*.'

And so, among the privileges of Mount Zion, there is *this* privilege for one thing, most practical, most helpful, most stimulating, of communion with the elder sons of God's family, who do God's commandments and hearken to the voice of His word, as they have been doing and hearkening from the beginning. As friends that serve us, as examples that teach us, as witnesses that confirm us, as fellow-students that inspire us, while together we gaze on the deep things of God, the truths of redemption, the mysteries of the Cross, in all these ways and with all these ends, we are come unto the angels.

(2) But, again, as a second company in this great convocation there is the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn. 'The Church of the Firstborn'—who are they?

Are they the Church of the Old Dispensation, the Church of patriarchs and prophets—the Firstborn in point of time? Scarcely. Doubtless we are come unto *them*,—come in spirit, come in standing to the great cloud of witnesses just described, whose faith encourages, whose footsteps guide. Doubtless, I say, we have come to the Church of the patriarchs and prophets. But not of these does the apostle speak. Not to these does the apostle refer. He would never have said of the patriarchs and prophets, that their names were written in heaven. And that for a very good reason,—the reason that they themselves were in heaven with the spirits of the just made perfect, whom the apostle refers to in the words that follow. No, it is not of the Church of the Old Dispensation in heaven that the author is thinking when he writes. It is rather the Church of the New Dispensation on earth,—the saints of God, as they struggle and sorrow below. Are not these God's Firstborn, everyone of them? All have

the calling, all have the glory of the Firstborn children. They are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. In them runs the line of the old twin privilege—the kingdom and the priesthood. Their names are written in heaven, among the archives of eternity, in the Lamb's Book of Life. But their persons are still on earth, while they work their own salvation out, and make their patent of nobility sure. They are justified, but not yet perfected. They are princes, but not yet crowned. They are sons and daughters of the Most High, but they wait the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.

And to this General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn the apostle says we are come. They may be scattered far and wide, divided by race and place, by diversities of creed and diversities of worship. But the matters that unite them are far more important than the matters that separate them. And in the love of God, in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the communion of the Holy Ghost they are all one. It is something, is it not, to be joined with them? It is something, is it not, for a lonely toiler at any time to know and remember that even one, though in unseen quarters or a distant land, is toiling and battling as he is,—swayed by the same great interests, bent on the same great ends? And by how much is the encouragement increased when, instead of one, we realize there is a multitude? Oh, this thought of a common life, common in effort, common in suffering, and therefore common in spirit and common in sympathy, should do more to comfort and constrain us than it does! Do you say, 'But how shall I realize it? I believe in the communion of saints, but how shall I actually feel it?' Well, brethren, do you know what it is to have communion with the saints that are nearest you? Then, and then only, shall you know what it is to have communion with those that are farthest,—get the consciousness of their sympathy, feel the impulses of their life! The sea is one, but the arms of the sea are many. Up through the inland mountains, far through the inland fields, these sea-arms reach and wind. Some are narrow, some are broad; some are hemmed in by bare beetling crags, others lie open to the sunshine and blue sky, where the emerald meadows and rosy orchards slant gently to the water's edge. But amidst all this variety of circumstance and of scene there is one thing

that is common to all, they thrill with the motion of the tide. The broad rolling sea may be far away—not a patch or a thread of it seen. But its influence and impulses are near, near as the heaving that rocks your boat, near as the wavelets that break at your feet. Even so with the Church. Do you know what it is to have fellowship with the two or three met locally? It is thus in your own particular religious corner, at your own particular religious place, you will have fellowship with the throng universal,—even the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn. Seize such opportunities, whether special or ordinary. They are opportunities of consolation. They are opportunities of strength.

Let the following narrative illustrate:—Some time ago a Canadian missionary and a group of companions were encamped by the side of a great Western river. Night dropped down: the landscape became dark. And as they sat by the gleaming watchfires, they heard a sound as of singing. Softly by snatches it came over the flood—the words of a Christian hymn, from a company of Red men just opposite. They raised an answering strain, the strain of another Christian hymn, and then across the river there was silence. Only for a moment, however, for sound came again,—this time lower, deeper, more muffled. It was the sound of intercession, and of intercession for them. Was that not significant? Did not the missionary and his friends feel encouraged by the token? For a token it undoubtedly was, a token and a symbol of the communion of saints, even fellowship most full and free with the faithful of every tongue that are scattered on earth,—the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn.

(3) But the mention of the river reminds us of another river—a river with a darker current, a river with a deeper bed, and the company that is gathered on the farther bank of *that*. Surely here at least is division, division of person and division of state—a division that makes fellowship impossible. 'No,' says the writer to the Hebrews, 'as we are come to the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn on earth, we are come, despite the river, to the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven. And joined to the Church that is militant here, we are joined to the Church that is triumphant yonder.' But what is this? Communion with those gone home—how is it represented, how is it realized? Well, the

Christian view is far enough off from the worldly superstitious view. That goes without saying. Compare the spiritualism of the Bible with the spiritualism of other creeds,—compare it with the spiritualism that is sought and resorted to by many in the present day,—how vast the difference! No pandering to idle curiosity, no encouragement to those who intrude upon things invisible, vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds—striving to force with picklocks the doors of which Christ keeps the keys. On the contrary, what reticence and reserve! And if the reticence and reserve are broken, what fitness of occasion, what dignity of speech!

And yet, while the relation here spoken of, the relation of the saints on earth to the saints above is far from familiarity, it is equally far from mere figure. Do not water it down, do not explain it away, as some do, as if all we had to do with the spirits of the just men made perfect were a utilizing of their example, a contact with their influence. It is true that in this symbolical sense their spirits are with us still, and in doing what they did, and in withstanding what they withstood, we may be said, in a sense, to come to them. So, in this symbolical sense, the spirit of a Raphael may be said to linger in the world of painting, the spirit of a Handel in the world of music, the spirit of a Shakespeare in the world of poetry, the spirit of a Howard or a Wilberforce in the world of beneficence. The good that men do is not in all cases interred with their bones. The spirits of our mighty dead still rule posterity from their urns. And to love what they loved, to seek what they sought, to follow what they followed, is, in a sense, to be one with themselves. And following out the thought on these lines, one might say that by every altar where sacrifice awaits us we are come to the spirit of Abraham, who offered his only son, accounting that God was able to raise him from the dead. By every corner where temptation lurks ready for us, we are come to the spirit of Joseph, who said, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' By every sickbed, where the limbs are weak and the head is aching, we are come to the spirit of Job, who, when smitten of God and afflicted, refrained from sinning with his lips or charging his Maker foolishly. To all these, and a multitude besides, the believer has come. Not a spot in his pilgrimage but is peopled by their memories. Not

an experience in his life but is sanctified by their pattern. All this is true. And yet, in saying it, I might really be going no farther than any moral and high-minded sceptic. It was George Eliot, who declared she found God unknowable and immortality incredible; it was George Eliot who said, in words that might pass for those of a Christian hymn, 'Oh may I join the choir invisible, the mighty fellowship of the immortal dead!' But her choir was a choir of shades, and the song that they seemed to sing was a song of echoes, that played in the corridors of the long gone past. But the spirits of just men of whom the author here speaks are something else than mere phantoms, they are living personalities, conscious and intelligent, with the same old interests and the same old loves they possessed while here upon earth.

And to these, not as they have been but as they are, the apostle says we are come. We may not be able to explain. This mysterious fellowship with the spirits of the just men made perfect when all by which we knew them on earth is gone,—the hands whose touches we felt, the faces whose expressions we watched, the eyes whose clear depths of light we looked into, we cannot explain it. But it is real notwithstanding. It is the doing of the Saviour's wonder-working Spirit. It is the fruit of His redeeming sacrifice. For Christ has died for us, that whether we wake or sleep (that is, whether we are alive or dead) we should live with Him, and not only live with Him, but live with Him together. I was once in the company of that great and good man I have quoted already—Dr. Duncan of Edinburgh. He was speaking with a much tried brother minister, over whom wave after wave of successive bereavement had rolled, ere the midtime of his life. Said this minister, recalling his experience, 'How utter the separation that death makes,—one moment here, another out in the mystery.' His feeling, you see, was the feeling of the poet—

I wage not any feud with death  
For changes wrought in form and face;  
No lower life that earth's embrace  
May breed in him, can fright my faith.

For this alone on Death I wreak  
The wrath that garners in my heart;  
He put our lives so far apart  
We cannot hear each other speak.

I remember the answer as the speaker relapsed

into the old Scotch tones of his early days: 'Division—na, na. Upstairs and doonstairs are no so far apart!' Two storeys, but one roof! Two chambers, but one house! Blessed are the saints that live in the Lord. Blessed are the saints that die in the Lord. And if they make their home in the same Lord, they cannot be far from each other. Yes, brethren, we may say, though in a different sense, of the saints in glory what we say of their living Head, 'Who shall ascend into heaven,—that is, to bring them down from above? Who shall descend into the deep,—that is, to bring them up from the dead?' For they are nigh, mystically but really nigh, to all whose hearts are engaged in the same worship, to all whose love goes forth to the same Lord. For in worship and in love are the true means of fellowship, and there are no means elsewhere. Let the worship be holy. Let the love be warm. And in spirit we shall see our departed, in spirit we shall recover our dead. And of this we have a figure in Nature. I look up to the heavens by day. No stars in the vast dome yonder,—the

space is empty, the blue is bare. But I lean on the parapet of some ancient well. And there, in the watery mirror, where the sky reflects itself, one star swims out, and another, and another, orbs which though hitherto hidden had been shining all the time.

So with the spirits of the just men made perfect. Though they shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever, they are often hid,—hid from sight and hid from sense. But stand by the brink of some well of salvation. And there, in the living water of a gospel worship, gospel ordinance, gospel truth, their images gradually steal forth to cheer, enlighten, and bless. You will realize that just where you look they look, though they look from more tranquil homes, though they look with serener eyes,—to the self-same facts of redemption, to the self-same mysteries of grace. And thus you are brought together.

Oh blest communion, fellowship Divine!  
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine,  
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine,  
Hallelujah.

## At the Literary Table.

### THE GREAT MARQUESS.

*Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 10s. net.*

MANY are called to the office of writing history, but few are chosen to be historians. In Scotland there has recently arisen an army of writers who have made their own country their theme, but as yet we can scarcely point to any who have made a name to live. Mr. Willcock promises well. Lately he wrote the history of Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromartie, and managed a difficult subject with unquestionable skill. Now he has attempted a far more trying task, a task which none of us can estimate the difficulty of; he has undertaken to restore the Marquess of Argyll to the place which he ought to occupy in the esteem and affection of his countrymen.

One test of a great historian, as of a great poet, is the choice of a worthy theme. Mr. Willcock's is worthy. For various reasons, some purely accidental perhaps, the Marquess of Argyll has never come by his own. We call it accidental

that the writing of the secular literature of our country has been largely in the hands of those who have felt no sympathy with the cause with which Argyll was identified. Sir Walter Scott starts to one's mind at once. It was accidental, not that Sir Walter Scott wrote and was so popular, but that his sympathies were on the other side. What he would have made of Argyll had he believed in Argyll's policy, we can guess. It is certain that he made less of Argyll than impartial history demanded, and he has been diligently followed and surpassed. So there was need for this book; its theme is great enough and urgent enough.

Another test of a historian's greatness is his faith in his theme. Mr. Willcock has faith in his theme. He believes that God and the nature of things are with him. This man was on the side of righteousness, he believes; on the side of what makes a nation great. He believes that he suffered for righteousness' sake, and by the temporary triumph of the evil that is in the world