

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST, THE SYMBOL OF VICTORY.

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Revelation 7-14. These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

In the interpretation of portions of Scripture, and the harmony of the whole, there will be a connection, real, if not understood. If the congruity of each with all is not gained, it is desirable not to bend or twist any part, so as to endeavour to make the whole harmonize. It is a good rule of interpretation, whether the ultimate design is gained or not; to make each part utter its own sense. The harmony of all Divine Scriptures is now yet to be accomplished, although eight hundred centuries have rolled their heavy rounds.

Asanousness in phraseology does not always mean the same thing, and the apparent sense floating on the surface, may not be the truth intended to be given. In the context, and in the spirit of the passage under review, may be found indications of a meaning to be taken, somewhat, or considerably different, from what the ring of the word would indicate.

These reflections are suggested by the text now to be considered. The blood of the Lamb presents to us the seal of the everlasting covenant, as Jesus said of the subject. This cup is the new covenant, in, or represented by my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. It is before us also as the price of salvation in the words of Paul. We have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins. It is also set forth as the means of purification in the words of John. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. But in the text before us now, while it is the means of purification, it is not represented as such in itself, so much as it is made such, by the persistent courage and heroic endurance of the innumerable company of martyrs, who came through a specially great tribulation, honouring God in their deaths, as in their lives.

Symbolical language requires very nice handling. The same figure does not always suit the same thought. Several figures are in the Bible used to express also the same idea. We are said to be washed by the Spirit of our God. The church is said to be cleansed by the washing of water by the word, somewhat like the words of Christ, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." The blood of Christ is used generally in the Bible as being applied to us, and exerting on us a sovereign efficacy in cleansing us, as if our faith did no more than entitle us to receive it. It is sometimes as the ground of forgiveness, also of eternal life and purity, but passively received in answer to faith.

Our text set it before us in a different aspect. The great multitude before the throne, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands, had come through the fearful persecutions and bloody wars, symbolized in the preceding chapter, and supposed by many eminent writers to be the fierce contests and cruel times immediately preceding the elevation of Constantine to the throne. In such a time of extreme peril, and consistent vindication of their vows to Christ, the martyrs washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, signifying that they fought the good fight of faith, and illustrated the meaning of the words of Paul, "That I may know him in the power of his resurrection, and in fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death."

Our Lord sets before us the same doctrine as recorded in 6 chap. John. He speaks of any one eating his flesh and drinking his blood. He says, "they have eternal life." He dwelleth in me and I in him. He uses figures. Then he drops the figures saying, "the word that I have spoken are spirit and life." Figures have a use, but many would rest on them, and amuse themselves with them to the neglect of the truth they were intended to convey. Resolve the figure into a doctrine, and it is far more palatable with many than if you resolved it into a life. Make it speak a sovereign and irresistible power, to take away the punishment of sin, involving to us no self-denial and patient endurance of evil, and death for Christ's sake, and it is popular. It is easily believed and tenaciously held, but exhibit it as a life of evil, and reproach, at loss, and the figure loses its attraction.

There is a tendency in our nature to take a part of a truth for the whole, and it is not confined to truths of an inferior order, but reaches those of the highest class, and which are designed to be when received moral powers of the most comprehensive action. St. Paul combats the evil when he says, "Shall we continue in sin because grace abounds?" The precious doctrine of the suffering work of Christ, beginning with the humiliation of his advent, through the whole of his self-denying and obedient life, and crowned by his voluntary and cruel death, as the basis of our acceptance with God, of forgiveness, and eternal life, gave rise to that most pestiferous heresy in the church, called anti-nomianism, a name indicative of the invasion of law to the claims of grace. A doctrine which runs a long course of pestiferous action, which is nominally now dead, but essentially alive in any one who disconnects the end of Christ's work in the heart and life of his people, from that which is the source of life and power to do the living will. It is severely reproved by the exalted Word of the Church, in his address to the seven churches in Asia Minor. The truth of the doctrine of his mediatory

work is forcibly applied by him in the word, "He that overcometh indicating a life work of patient labour, and continual endurance unto death, for glory, and luminous shining that what he did is to be followed by wretched people will do. The promise of final salvation applying only to those who also serve and obey him." Promises of indiscriminate magnitude, the privilege to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God to the church at Ephesus. The hidden manna and the white stone, and the new name written to the church at Smyrna. Ruler over the nations to that of Thyatira. White raiment and a place in the Book of Life to that at Sardis. To be pillar in the house of God to that at Philadelphia, and to another the privilege to sit down with the Glorified One on his throne, even he says as I also overcome and then sat down with my Father in his throne.

There is another bad tendency in our nature. When we have discovered truths, and taken the part we fancy, of forgetting or refusing to remember anything of the part rejected. The Christian world contains many extremists. The errors which divide the body of Christ come from such. Some will have all doctrine, and others all practice. Some will rest in Christ and divo contentedly in sin, and others will show a fair moral extension, and despise the blood of the covenant, the law of the Father coming to men through the accepted sacrifices of the Son. They will, they say, do what is right, and offer themselves and their work to God, without the mediation of any one, even of him who is declared to be the mediator between God and man.

In the business of life it is not found that the dislocation of truth is safe, or at all likely to secure expected results of good capital and friendships in the commercial life give the motive agencies. Diligence, perseverance, and thoughtfulness apply the power of the other to the gaining of profit, the avoidance of loss and the realization of wealth and position. Here is an entire truth. The doctrine of business life and its practical uses. Disconnect the part from the other, and where are you. There may be some instance of wonderful genius forcing their way forward and upward, without capital or friends, but they are few and exceptional. Men gain their ends with whole truths, the motive power, and the practice are linked together.

God has in moral and spiritual things left man to himself. The patriarchal age of 2000 years is one instance. The Mosaic is another with the difference that the law of God or the native power of truth, enshrined in the cold hard tables of stone, and fringed with the terrible indications of imbeciling justice and inflexible retribution was added. "I regarded them not, saith the Lord," is the clear, if cold symbol of the Mosaic dispensation. God visited such with the Gospel, which, in addition to all in the preceding religions, is the drawing near of the life and grace of deity to man. No more left to himself, nor to stern law but to himself and law and the spirit of the living God.

But the end contemplated by God in the gospel is the vindication and maintenance of law. I came not said Jesus to destroy the law, but to fulfil. He said, "I have said, but not one jot or tittle of the law shall pass until all are fulfilled. The gospel itself is called the law of the spirit of life in Christ. The setting forth of Christ as a sacrifice through faith in his blood, is a declaration of God's righteousness, and its issues in the righteousness of all benefitted by it, is the vindication of the righteousness in the remission of sins, and in being the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. In short, the gospel of Christ is a fuller development of the preceding religions. The offering up in all to make men holy—in the first without a written law, in the second with it, and in the third, man spiritualized, and the law enforced by Deity drawing near the human nature and transfiguring its power into the weakness of man.

The whole work of Christ, from the advent to the cross, from the grave to new life, and from earth to a seat at the right hand of the majesty in the heaven, is a grand motive influence to be received by faith and work out in us a meeting for the glory of God. We are saved when we believe, for faith implies a voluntary acceptance of Christ as master and Lord. We are bound to a divine service the moment we from the heart call Jesus Lord. It means not saying Lord Lord, but doing what that means as well. No more our will and pleasure, no more living for enjoyment in anything, no, not even in religion, but the path Jesus trod is to be ours with all its duties, its self-denials, its love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity whatever that brings. If to go with him without the camp bearing his reproach. If to imperil or lose name and position and property and life; all must be accepted, endured, wrought out as those did who came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They gloried in the cross of Christ, but they knew what it taught. They learned the Divine lesson in that as they became by the faith of their suffering Lord more and more like him, partaker of his sufferings and conformable to his death, they were washing their robes in his blood, and as St Paul said, "filling up what remained of the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake the church."

Belief in a dogma, if it even is the embodiment of the highest and most influential truths is just valuable as it is used. A label concerning it, however, may be a most serious evil if it is really the Divine motive to the consecration of heart and life in the service of Christ. A morality springing from selfishness, or from regard to conventional usages, or from the legal motive of obedience to God, may be in all destitute of the gospel motive, and involve doing despite to the spirit of grace, and counting the blood of the covenant a common thing. There is much of suggestive thought to any who rest on any motive else than that of the gospel in the words of the text. The phraseology which some would shew, as savouring of temple and sacrificial rites, and a deity paid by human blood; in their vain, relics of pagan and Jewish religious ideas, based on false conceptions of the deity, and a low civilization, speak with the most emphatic conception,

of faith and duty, and has in it the most inspiring stimulus to the attainment of the highest ideal of humanity.

In a world of sinners and sin, there is no possible deliverance from the one, and redemption from the other, save by suffering. It can only be overcome and removed by sin and that means suffering. It would not mean that in a world where all were both righteous and it will not at all ways mean that in this world, but for the centuries of the past, and it may be for some to come obedience to God and to the law of Christ, will as ever mean suffering. There is an eternal law in the removal of sin which forbids any substitute in its place. It is hinted at in these words: "For it became Him by whom all things and for whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain or leader of our salvation perfect through suffering."

But we may not draw the inference that suffering is pleasing to God, and that his law is satisfied by suffering. This has been done with great detriment to true religion and to right conception of the Deity on which true religion rests. If anything in the Bible favours apparently the inference named, it should be remembered that the suffering even into death is secondary and not primary. There is a glory in patient suffering for righteousness sake; but which element is the most likely to please God, the suffering, or the patient following out of righteousness? The attendant or the principal? That which is confessedly an evil, or that which sanctifies the evil? In 1st Peter, 19 to the end is a very conclusive statement in favour of righteousness versus suffering, and is applied to Christ and his obedience, by which many are made righteous. The Apostle mentions two kinds of suffering, and only that one is acceptable with God, which is endured for doing well. He says: "For even hereunto will ye call it because Christ also suffered for us, and he adds to show that in his meritorious work suffering had the lower place. The just for the unjust, "who did no sin, etc., and all that we should live unto righteousness."

But why is suffering so prominently named? "by whose stripes ye were healed." Why is the death on the cross, his bearing our sins in his body on the tree, and as is said in another place, "ye are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ," said again, "he hath washed us from our sins in his own blood;" if the suffering and the death, were not the ransom price of forgiveness and eternal life, and if they were not the consideration which prevails on God to be gracious and merciful. Perhaps because suffering, and especially unto death is the most expressive symbol of a life of holy obedience in a world of sin and sinners, and it may be also, that movable as suffering is in doing well, it is that which is likely to be the greatest hindrance in serving God. Suffering is thus made the symbol of salvation, that duty may be done in circumstances so unfavorable, and that we may rise above the inevitable and painful incidents attending it.

That which is the visible sign of the inward grace, is put in the foreground. A symbolical language is used, and the real offering which Christ made on behalf of sinners to the Father, is held by us covered with the drapery of its human results. The stripes, the horrors attending the most ignominious and cruel death, are said to be the price of our redemption, because they were the evidences of the completion of his work of humiliation, which began with his advent into a world of sin and sinners, was continued through his life of self-denial and voluntary obedience, and was consummated when he loved his head on the cross.

It is ever understood, that the performance of any great service, has its brightest glory in the event, which shows its full completion. It is thus that the cross, and the spear of the Roman soldier piercing the side of Jesus, and giving in the flow of the water and blood the fullest proof of death, because the symbols of the work which achieved for men eternal redemption. It is thus that the whole merit of Christ, which no one will say was confined to his death, is affixed to one event of many, because that event was the last, and the one corroborative of the value of all the rest. When a renowned warrior, after a long series of victories, dies on the field of victory, his name becomes the synonyme of all that preceded. Lutzen celebrates the merits of Gustavus Adolphus; Trafalgar throws its glory on all the life of Nelson. In an immeasurably higher sense Calvary and the bloody cross—the great defence which Jesus then accomplished, gives in one word the name to his whole redeeming work. It becomes the inspirational symbol of all that he did, and of all that we should do. It nerve the martyrs for the struggle for righteousness even unto death. "By this sign they conquered," when they would have drawn back. The symbolical language of our text is appropriate. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Why do we glorify Calvary? Why are the martyrs said to have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? Is it to observe the glory of the advent, or of the perfect moral life of Jesus, to make his miracles of mercy of no account and that marvellous renunciation of self which run through the whole of his life? A vain and most exquisite beauty of no value, or to concentrate the whole redeeming work on a scene of suffering which placed duty, released the claims of law and justice, and made forgiveness possible, and eternal life a donative for a moment pain? Let those who have this view, we confess we cannot, and will not. We admit the symbolical language of Scripture, but it is only symbol. We remove the verbal covering to behold underneath that which pleased God. The offering of Jesus was not so much suffering and death. The offering which he made to God, as Paul calls it, "an offering of a sweet smelling savour" was his spirit and life from the humiliation of the advent to that of the Cross. The suffering was the bodily covering, worthy as such to be the symbol of redemption, the token of his wondrous love to man, but to God it was nothing. What pleased God was the self-denying and obedient spirit of the Son of his love.

In denying to suffering any part in the price of our redemption in its Godward aspect, we are guilty of a serious error.

pect, there is freely admitted its use to man as a symbol of what really redeemed the world. Only let it be so understood. Let not the nature of God, and the charge of a love of suffering, let the law of God be loaded with the mill, so that the soul of the suffering, however pure in him self, or his own suffering, all can be laid down, or the suffering, or the perfect obedience of its subjects, only can do this. And the will of God does it because of the obedience of the Son of His love. I claim forgiveness and eternal life to all who obey the Son. He, by the will of God, has become "the author of eternal salvation to as many as obey Him." Filled to be the perfect exemplar to the race of man in his obedience, and its attendant suffering, he became the leader and captain of the many sons who are being brought to glory. His cross, his shed blood, as the symbols of his perfection as a Saviour, are thus the inter-props of what we should be.

It is such a view of the death of Jesus which illustrates the phraseology of our text, and explains what is signified in the martyrs washing their robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb. They laboured, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of the faith, and at the cross, the symbol of the perfection of His will, and into heaven, where the Lamb is as newly slain, and the blood of his sacrifice is the token of his victory, and fits the spirit of the perfect with an undying enthusiasm as they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." It is the song of earth as well as of heaven—the inspiring, life-giving, world-renouncing song of every true servant of Christ. John in his vision heard its response from every creature on earth, and under the earth, an universal inscription of blessing, and honour, and glory, and might, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb—a name indicative of much patience, and humble endurance of suffering of what is ever the return in this world of sin and sinners to a work of unspotted righteousness, and which renders the obedience of incalculable value, as it denotes a voluntary subjection to evil, that righteousness may be established in the place of sin, and saints fill God's earth with the glory which Jehovah has sworn shall cover it as the waters do the deep.

The Captain of the Lord's host goes forth before his people, with the symbols of warfare emblazoned on his banners. It is all a sign of duty—a remembrance of his own words to his disciples when on the earth: "The servant shall be as his Lord." The very work he did is theirs also. The spirit of the Lamb, and the constancy to death, and the doing, not our will, but the will of our Father in Heaven, the cross and the blood significantly set forth.

Christian soldiers, there is not any truth more worthy of your devout attention than the one now presented to you. Like the martyrs who came out of the great tribulation, wash your robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, in the sense of playing your part in life and death under the inspiration of the life and death of your Lord. Turn your thoughts away from suffering. It will come if you are faithfully busy let it come, and meekly bear it. Do not let your hands rest too much on the sufferings of your Lord, if you find that it prevents you from abiding as clearly as you should that wondrous love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity which in his life and death were so illustriously displayed in practice. See in it your duty and your stimulus to be like-minded, and in the discipline of your service like-obedient. Let the blood of the Lamb be to you the sign that you are to resist even unto death, striving against sin. Let it show you that to you, as to Christ, the crown is beyond the cross, and the way to glory, is by the will of God, and an eternal law, inflexible and irrevocable in a world of sin and sinners, the path of righteousness suffering.

Do not trouble yourselves about the forgiveness of sin, and the way hidden in the depths of the wisdom of the Godhead how it is forgiven, in accordance with law and justice. We know that it is forgiven freely and fully through the redemption which is in Christ. We know that to receive love and follow Christ, bearing in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, there is to us no condemnation. We are accepted in the beloved one. He is the reason of forgiveness, and of God's love to us. The comfort of knowing that we are Christ's, and God's, is not to be drawn from an abstract dogma, but from our following our Master in the regeneration. It is not by saying Lord, Lord, but by doing the will of our Father in heaven; by studying and aiming to follow out the commands of Jesus, especially those so fully explained and spiritualized in what is called the Sermon on the Mount.

We are too apt to think the fighting work as of the past—too apt to associate it with the rage of kings and governments. We discern more readily an opposition to Christ and his kingdom in what threatens imprisonment, or loss of goods, or life. We are ignorant of Satan's devices, are forgetful that he does transform himself into an angel of light, and his ways into the aspect of God's ways. There are the lusts of the eye and the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life now as ever assailing the Christian, and there are wrestlings, not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and with wicked spirits in the regions of the air. Was there ever a time like the present, when the love of money is so eminently the root of all evil; when Christians are like the world in its love and pursuits; when the savour of Godliness stinks by contact with an unholiness world. Shall I add, when Christ dwells as little by faith in the heart and the Holy Spirit of God as little shows the power of converting grace on the world of sinners, and of sanctifying and blessing of Christ's people.

Men are prone to run to extremes in doctrine as in anything else. Some may say let us forget the sacrificial language of the Bible, and fasten our attention on the morals of Jesus, and others may say, let us glory in the cross, and try to understand how its sorrows placated God, and laid the basis for human salvation. Let us see how it can fit us to die in peace, and before that, be our eternal safeguard from the horrors of a future perdition. I think both are partly right, but I think both are partly wrong.

right and greatly wrong. To disconnect the whole work of Jesus from the morals he commanded, is to lose the inspiration to do right, the life without which we are helpless for good, the gift of the Holy Spirit, without which we try to be obedient in the foolishness of the poor Adamite nature. We try, and our morality is a cold affair, springing from the stimulus of the conventional laws of society and selfishness. To try to do good without Christ in the heart, is to try to please God in disobedience to his grace, a manner that we believe on him who hath sent. To live without union to Christ is as opposed to the laws of the spiritual world, as it would be to those in the third world, were we to expect fruit from the lopped off branch of a vine. If our text teaches anything, it is that the great multitude around the throne reached the desired glory, because they struggled and fought under the eye of their leader. What he did and suffered, he commanded them to do. His cross, his shed blood, the path which was opened for sinners led them to their feared suffering, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They suffered, for he suffered before them.

What is preserved of the records of the early centuries of the church, tell us how the martyrs coveted the crown of martyrdom. Perhaps erred much in this respect. But the evidence is ample that their enthusiasm came from an intense love of their ascended Lord. We are not told that they perplexed themselves with insoluble questions on the nature of Christ's redeeming work. They were satisfied to rest on a fact that Christ died for their sins, and rose again for their justification. They had a theory of redemption, but it was of a conflict with Satan the Lord of the underworld and of Christ entering the prison house and delivering the captives. They had some of the common, governmental ideas which afterwards were introduced into theories of the atonement. They speculated on the nature of their Lord, but not on his work, a reason for this could be given in their love of Christ which led them to place him high as the highest, and to regard his work of induration as simply sufficient and perfect. It was not needful to reason on it, it could not but be sufficient and perfect. To follow him was to secure all the benefits of what he had done. There was no need of asking how it effected God and his law, nor if the suffering was the redemption price, for their views were directed by the ancient Old Testament doctrine of the human race, and especially the dead being in captivity to Satan, and their conception of the work of Christ naturally took up the form of a deliverance by power. The sorrows of Jesus at the death on the cross were of Satan, Jesus dying entered the prison of Hadar, overcame in conflict Satan and deposited him of his prey. He rose from the dead leading captivity captive.

The Redeemer to the early Christians was a conqueror, not the payer of debt, nor the compromiser of a violated law, but simply a conqueror. To wash their robes in his blood was to them significant of being conquerors themselves though him who had loved them. The words of the Glorified one to the Churches of Asia Minor, sounded the note of duty. "To him that overcometh."

When we took a look at ourselves and neighbourhoods, and country, and world, we were painfully impressed with the conviction that the truth which is the most powerful stimulus to a holy heart, and life is not well understood. Our Christian nations do not show well before heathen nations, when we consider the much that has been given. Christians in our land, other lands are not the peculiar people, the New Testament speaks of. The greed of gain. The love of display and the pride of life are fearfully significant of our times. Religion itself is more a matter of enjoyment than duty. It is prized chiefly that it may make us happy and help us to die well. Its ordinances are to the Protestant what the priest is to the Romanist, means of absolution and extreme unction in the article of death. Faith in the blood of Christ, washing our robes, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb is regarded as most necessary when we are in some eminent danger or in view of death. Some wonderful change is to be brought by it on us at the close of life. This is not the doctrine in our text, nor can it be fairly deduced from the general tenor of the Bible revelations. When St. Paul speaks of the righteousness, he wendeavouring to have by the faith of Christ, he added these impressive words, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being conformed to his death?" He says also "If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him." If we be dead with him we shall also live with him. The suffering of Christ are the example to us. The washing our robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb, in the doing right at all times, the suffering for it if need be even as Christ endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, even as he resisted unto death striving against sin. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. His cross, his poured out blood denote the rage of sinners at the righteous doer. They significantly look at us who have under Christ the commission to put down sin and establish righteousness. They work the signs of our leaders and are the encouragement to us to do and suffer likewise. So the innumerable throng round about the throne understood them. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Mystical and symbolical words, denoting that they accepted their duty with its suffering, not only content but glad to be as their Lord, for the joy set before them, as before him they endured the cross, despising the shame, and before the throne of God they became joint-heirs with Christ.

It is stated that Thiers, 47 years ago, possessed only 40 francs. We dare to say he was a good deal happier than he is now—and didn't know it.

M. and Miss, Hyacinthe Levesque, intend to start a newspaper, at Brussels, devoted to the propagation of "New Catholic" views of the "Old Orthodox."