

accurate account outside Genesis is found. We have therefore nothing to decide whether the flood were universal or not, its tradition is not universal, at least we have no traces of such tradition in Egypt, Persia, nor in Central Africa, apart from Mohametan influences.

We have our Bible. An author of thirty years ago writing of Canada would not include the Maritime Provinces or the great North-West. Canada then was simply Ontario and Quebec—Upper and Lower Canada. The writer of Genesis by "the face of all the earth, the mountains and every high hill," would mean the earth, mountains and hills as then known; and as we have no accurate means of knowing what was the earth as then known, we cannot settle the question by an appeal to Genesis. We may discuss probabilities, but a strict commentary of our record alone will yield us no certain data; nor is it necessary for the purpose for which the Bible was written, which, as we have already hinted, has a more important bearing upon practical truth. We shall then pass on to stable ground.

The time of Noah was characterized by great wickedness (Gen. vi. 5), and daring festivity. Matt. xxiv. 37 and Ps. lxxiii. 6-12 will doubtlessly describe their spirit. "Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches."

This corruption is described as universal. The public sentiment was utterly ungodly; "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them was gone back, there was none that did good, no, not one."

It is an easy thing to fall in with a public sentiment, to accept the common standard of morality, and that without any inquiry as to the correctness of the sentiment, the authority

of that standard. A solitary evil looks very black, but when a large company engage therein it meets with more general favour. Thus a dollar purloined is a crime, the dollars obtained by fraud in common mercantile speculation seem respectable. There is a constant tendency to follow the easy-going morality with which we are surrounded. We were sitting at a public dining table where the great majority were total abstainers. "I should like a glass," we overheard; "but as no one else seems to take one, we should become odd." Twenty-five years ago he was a bold man who at some gatherings could firmly say "No," to the offered glass; it needed moral courage to drink in the instance we have mentioned, where total abstinence was no virtue, but its practice a cowardice. Noah was singular, he dared to be singular, he preached righteousness (2 Pet. ii. 5) when it was unpopular, maintained his integrity when all around were false. Noah was no timeserver, nor moral coward. He was alone, but he had the courage of his convictions, he toiled on, and boldly uttered his message.

Noah's faith had a specific direction, "Being warned concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear." We need in these days a faith in the direction Noah took. Rebounding from some very hard presentations of God's providence and redemption, we are flying to the other extreme and meeting the spirit which Isaiah describes (xxx. 10): "Prophecy not unto us right things: speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits." Men are ready to accept God's mercy and a chance at the last; they are not ready to accept as rules of life the continued declaration of providence and revelation—"The wicked shall not go unpunished." Such blindness is wilful folly, for is there not a coming judgment for all sin? and where can hope be found for sin unforsaken? There is a marked significance in the fact that the pearl of parables which opens up so thoroughly the father's heart, emphatically represents no sign from that father as long as the prodigal riots, not even in the degradation and hunger of the swineherd, or any outstretched arm put forth until there is repentance. Afar off indeed the son is seen by love's keen eye, but the steps are then turned—they are homeward bound. God never compromises with sin, never!