

"Even so," they cry, "Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments."*

(2) Again, notice the expression, "Ye powers of the Lord." Surely we may include under this expression all those great forces of nature, which man has learnt only in recent days, and is still learning, to subdue to his use and comfort. In the old days, when the cultivated Alexandrian Jew was, I think we may say, a leader of thought amongst men, these powers were unexplained phenomena, grand and terrible—but they were "powers of the Lord," controlled and ruled by Him. Fascinated, as he often was, by "the glow of Greek culture and wisdom," the Alexandrian Jew returned with unabated ardour to his Old Testament Scriptures, and felt that they gave a light which nothing else did. And one thing they taught him, amid many a wild speculation it may be, was, that all these powers were "powers of the Lord": to him, as to the more ancient Psalmist of his nation, the lightning and the thunder were still the voice of the Lord breaking the cedar trees of Lebanon and discovering the thick bushes in the dark, sub-tropical night.†

(3) There is another expression:—"O ye nights and days, bless ye the Lord," which we should consider. It is no fortuitous order. It is the order of one who knew his Bible. He does not forget that in the Order of Creation, it was first evening and then morning:—"The Evening and the Morning were one day." This, as has been well observed, is God's order in spiritual things as in natural. The darkness was there, and then the true Light, which lighteneth every man coming into the world, came and shone upon it. "Ye were some time darkness," says St. Paul to the Ephesians, "but now are ye light in the Lord."‡ And so St. Peter says to his Brethren of the Dispersion, that God had called them "out of darkness into His marvellous light."§ It is God's order then—first death, then life; first the Crucifixion, and then the Resurrection.

The Benedicite has been used in the public service of the Church from the earliest times. St Chrysostom says that in his day it was sung in all places throughout the world; it was at one time held of all the Canticles in the highest estimation; in the Gallican Church it was sung before the Gospel in the Holy Communion office; in the old Sarum use it was sung on Sundays only; in the Greek Church it is the last of nine hymns to be sung at the service called Lauds; and in our own Prayer Book of 1549 it is ordered to be sung instead of the Te Deum during Lent—a restriction which was afterwards withdrawn. And instead of the concluding Doxology in the Greek, we use the "Gloria Patri," thus turning it into a Christian hymn.

The Benedicite may be called the Hymn of the Student of Nature. The ancient Israelite was a great student of Nature. Of course, he was not a scientific observer as we understand the phrase, but he was an acute observer of phenomena nevertheless. The love of natural history is recorded of Solomon;—"he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts and of fowl, and of creeping things and of fishes."|| The prophet Joel, too, describes with great accuracy, "the appearance of locusts as the appearance of horses," a and his brother prophet, Nahum, reminds us, with equal accuracy, of the effect of cold and darkness upon the locust swarm.^b

* Isa. vi. 6, 7; St. Luke, xxii. 43, xv. 7, 10; Rev. xvi. 7.

† Ps. xxix. 5.

‡ Eph. v. 8.

§ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

|| 1 Kings iv. 33.

a Joel ii. 4. cf. Rev. ix. 7.

b Nahum iii. 17.

ON BIBLE READING.

[From the West Indian Guardian.]

Professor Kirkpatrick, alluding to Westcott, points out that the word *Biblia* is not the feminine singular but the plural neuter, and therefore instead of "the Book" (Bible) it would be better to read *The Books*. Thus by a correct translation *The Sacred Books* would be better understood as "The Word of God" than by the modern attempt to make the book as it stands *Inspiration itself*. With this descriptive title the unequal values of the different Books in "The Divine Library" could be more easily explained.

But our object is to offer some remarks on the increasing neglect of reading our Sacred Books. This seems to be rather passed over in surface speeches and platitudinous teachings; but those who learn as they go realize it too sadly. We fancy the Books are still perused to some extent by many who are poorly instructed. They are also a rich store-house for information or argument for Christian converts from one of the "Christian sects" to another, or from any non-Christian religion to some of the many kinds of Christianity. But we fear that the mass of average Christians—the very bone and sinew of Christian life and piety—is by no means distinguished by its habitual study of those old writings of men whose minds were infused with the Spirit of God.

In this we do not imply any falling off in their reading of the Sacred Books on the part of those whose proper duty it is to expound them. On the other hand such we believe have a more intelligent grasp of their meaning and more rational respect for their teaching than prevailed at any other period in the past twelve hundred years. Nor in this daily reading do we include, of course, the lucubrations of self-willed Christian sceptics who read the books with the desire to win fame by destroying them, though eating their bread from funds to defend them.

We know how readily many would join issue with us in our fears, while others would object on unfriendly grounds; but the something that concerns us, and the fact that we are most reluctant to welcome, is the growing feeling among piously inclined persons that the sacred writings are not quite *satisfactory*. We set aside the so-called "criticism" of merely intellectual religionists, and the perverting of Scripture on the part of *Enthusiasts*; but we bewail the tendency to shelve old records embodying special revelations from God to man on the plea, however tacitly acquiesced in, that they *have lost their force*.

While we might enumerate many causes for this feature among Bible believers, one reason stands out prominently in the opinion that all error, as well as *truth*, held by those who call themselves Christians, is based avowedly on the teaching of the Bible. So suggestive is this to the practical mind that few can be surprised at the consequence. Yet, instead of enquiring how it can be, some accuse those who recognize this unpleasant proposition of being secretly anxious to make little of the authority of the Word of God!

We do not presume to have an infallible, "cut and dried," antidote for this prevailing disorder. But with due respect to volumes written on the subject with regard to Rome, infidelity, "The World," ignorance, self-righteousness and kindred lions on the path, we are strongly impressed with the notion that the difficulty (among Non-Romanists at all events) lies rather in that *superstitious* use of the Bible commonly called *Bibliolatry*. We fear that confusion has followed well-meaning but unwarranted attempts to make the Bible an *oracle* in itself instead of a *witness* to Christianity. The Bible is not a treatise of systematic divinity, but an historical monument attesting the claims of God upon man and the duty of man unto God. The Gos-

pels reveal the mystery of the Incarnation as the ground work of all our hopes, and the Apostolical Letters pleadingly urge on those Baptismally united to their Incarnated Head the importance of conforming their souls and bodies to the lines of those imperishable truths, in which they have been already instructed, and as members of a Divine Kingdom into which they have been already admitted. The Testament (or New Covenant) was written for and to—not a *sinful heathen* world—but those at the time in the fold of the Holy Catholic Church, whose doctrines were settled and whose principles were catechetically taught before a single line of the second book of the Holy Writings was committed to paper. And was it not ages afterwards before those writings were collected and put forth as canonical? They are, indeed, to be revered, *not* merely as God's word, but as faithfully instructing us about The Word of God, who existed before the world was made. Their language is entirely human: the principles enforced in them are Divine and eternal. But this New Bible does not assume to take the place of Him of whom it speaks; nor does it put itself instead of those heavenly channels of grace divinely ordained; nor, again, is there one word in it indicating that its penman wished it to be substituted for the extension of the Incarnation, namely, the Holy Church, the Body of Jesus, the fold containing good and bad until the end. So far is the Testament from doing so that its correct interpretation, by any system of explanation that will stand the test, not only of human experience, but of patristic and modern learning, is found in what best recognizes the paramount claims of Christ the Incarnate, the Sacraments, the Church, the Ministry, and the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven among men. In short, the Inspired Books speak concerning Christ and His Church. The Church, if the Holy Writings be reliable, has the assurance of the Divine presence and keeping until the second Advent. To this great living, teaching body, the pillar and ground of truth, have the Sacred Books witnessed. To the Church is entrusted the Saviour's Mission: to the Scriptures is given the witness of simple facts, of incidental allusions and of direct admonitions.

If the Testament, as an early collection of inspired documents, be thus an auxiliary in the proper sense, to the living Church, and not an *oracle* unconnected with it, it would follow, whatever be expected of theological experts, that the mass of instructed and therefore enlightened Christians can most satisfactorily read those sacred writings when their relation to the Church is clearly understood,—when they feel that the sacred penman inked warnings and teaching applicable to readers in our age, as members, of the same visible Church that the Apostles themselves, and the persons they wrote for, belonged to. He who studies the Sacred Writings with this key to their meaning will not read them to find out "the truth" or a new religion for himself; will not worry over difficulties as if God asked him to explain them, but will read those precious old Memoirs and Letters in the Spirit of Devotion that his faith and love as a churchman in the doctrines of the Apostles may be deepened and enriched. That he may be wiser unto salvation in the ancient folds of his pious forefathers; that the Christian life may have practical force on his conduct, and religion may thus be indeed a reality. This, we submit, is the true antidote for neglect of Bible reading. It is simply to adopt the devotional reading of Scripture instead of its Protestant abuse as an *oracle* or the Roman conception of it as a book of *occult* or hidden meaning. To thus read the Testament, for the purpose for which it was *originally intended*, is to make it indeed as of old "a lamp for our feet and a guide for our path."

In another article we may have some remarks on those false systems which claim, but really do not take "the Bible for their guide."