

Truth, and when He gives "utterance," it will be in those *words* which will not make false impressions on the hearers' minds.

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THE IRON RULE.

"A man child who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron.—Rev. xii. 5.

We do not often venture into regions speculative, especially when the speculations are concerning the twilight regions of prophecy. However, something may be said in favor of time spent in tracing the apparent or real connection between prophecy and its fulfilment, when that fulfilment is either a thing of the past or is in course of being fulfilled.

This rod of iron rule, what is it? There are three passages in the book of Revelation where the expression occurs. The last one, namely, that in the nineteenth chapter, is evidently a quotation from the second Psalm, and is applied to Christ in His rule over hostile nations, wherein this rod of iron symbolizes their destruction, for it is said that these nations shall be broken to slivers like as pottery may be broken by the blow of a rod of iron. We leave this passage to those who delight to day-dream about the times of the millennium.

But in the fifth verse of the twelfth chapter is a passage concerning which we wish to throw out a thought or two. It occurs in that symbolical vision of the woman who brought forth a man child in the presence of a great beast ready and expecting to devour it at its birth. However, the child was miraculously preserved, that he might rule the nations with a rod of iron.

At first, our sympathies are against the beast and with the coming babe, but after its safety is assured, and we feel relieved by the result, behold an expression which turns the tables upon us, and makes us regret that the beast was cheated of its prey; for surely a rule for the nations symbolized by a rod of iron means anything but their good, at least, that is the surface thought legitimately connected with the expression.

But evidently the whole meaning of

the passage hinges on what this *man child* represents. We have without hesitation made it symbolize the *printed* Bible, when the efforts put forth during the times of the Reformation to strangle it at its birth, and their complete failure, all fit into the vision with a completeness that to us is satisfactory.

Now, granted this to be correct, how fit into the picture the *iron* rule of the printed Bible? When the *law* was given to the Israelites at Mount Sinai it was amidst surroundings which awakened terror and suggested a reign of fear. Even Paul called this reign a *yoke of bondage*.

The essence of this rule of terror consisted in the fact that they were called on to observe certain minute, lettered precepts under the compulsion of special penalties connected with the breach of any one or all of them. Hence the whole *regime* was likened to a cross, inexorable schoolmaster, with his lash by his side ready for immediate use.

Now, when *this law* is taken and a part of it erased, and other laws, still more minute, put in their place, and then sent forth as the rule of life, is there not a striking similarity between the reign of law in either *regime*?

But at once it is replied that the reign of law after this pattern is, by contrast with barbaric law, a blessing, and not a curse. Certainly, and so was the reign of the Mosaic code a vast improvement over those of surrounding nations. And yet whilst this is evidently true, nevertheless this iron rule of the Bible, in all its acknowledged advantages, must be contrasted with something vastly better, else will the expression not only lose its force, but be clearly out of place as utterly misleading in this connection.

This contrast is evidently that which Paul so vividly brings out when he contrasts the rule of the letter with the rule of the Spirit—the letter killeth, the Spirit giveth life. The law whips into obedience, and by so doing secures moral living and civilized life, but is death to all hopes of reaching the ideal life which the Almighty has placed in the inner being of man. This life of true liberty can only be secured under the