

"food of angels." From the smitten rock at Rephidim, the waters gushed forth. Amalek retreated before the conquerors, and the people at length reached the mount of God. Having here received the Law, now in possession of the rule of life and conduct, that great multitude, numbering upwards of two millions, set forward towards the goal of their journey—the "promised land." Still observing their tribal divisions, they march onward. Each tribe unfurls to the breeze its own distinct standard. Each maintains a separate and distinct existence under its own banner. Each has its own special commander; but over all there is the great and wise leader of that host which constitutes the many thousands of Israel. Well-disciplined and organized, they prepare to march onward, and all are ready for the wilderness journey. Still they move not. Every eye is earnestly directed to one object, and all are expecting the marching signal. The cloudy pillar still hovers in front of the expectant host. The Ark of the Covenant yet remains motionless, for the finger of God has not yet pointed onward and the time of God has not yet come, and still they must wait with patience. Gradually, at length, the dark cloud begins to move, and the Ark of the Covenant instantly follows the guiding signal. The leader of the advancing host then solemnly repeats the accustomed prayer, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee." Thus, having trusted themselves to the guidance of Omnipotence, the host advances, till the cloud again rests—the ark pauses, and Moses earnestly repeats the resting prayer, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."

From the many thoughts which this passage in the history of the Church, and particularly the prayer of Moses, naturally suggest, we must content ourselves with a passing notice of the following:—

First of all, we may see in the prayer before us the simple and strong faith of the Old Testament Church in the immediate government of a personal God.

And amid all the comparative disadvantages under which the Church of the Old Testament dispensation labored, we find an unshaken belief in one great truth thoroughly adapted for fostering holiness and administering hope, joy, comfort. The administration of the Church was recognized by the true Israelite to be under the *immediate* superintendence of God. Every true member of the Theocracy acknowledged the fact; in the national history there was everything tending to foster this solemn and hallowing belief in the constant care and unerring wisdom of the Great King and Head of the Church. Ever since the call of Abraham did its history point very emphatically to this conclusion. The marvellous character of the Exodus, and the manifestations of God's mercy through the past portion of the wilderness journey,

confirmed the fact. Everything around them served to remind the Israelites that they were God's special care—God's chosen inheritance and His peculiar treasure; that He was indeed a God *near at hand*, and not *far off* from his Church. And, brethren, are there not times when the Church is in special danger of forgetting even this rudimentary truth of our holy religion—times when she does not fully and *practically* realize the presence and nearness of God as her father, while *theoretically* she does not and cannot deny the truth. And indeed we think she is not by any means free from this danger at the present stage of her journey. Were we carefully to read the signs of the times—were we able to arrive, by a wide and careful induction, at a true generalization, perhaps we would find that the weakness and error, and the evident unrest of the Church of the present day, may be traced to a forgetfulness of this sublime truth,—not simply that the "Lord God omnipotent reigneth," but that the special government of His Church is upon His shoulders—that the God of Jeshurun is her refuge—that underneath her are the "everlasting arms." We have arrived, brethren, at a period of the most ardent and general speculation. We have witnessed the progress and wide-spread influence of a philosophy which, though it cannot be regarded as profound, has yet made its influence widely and deeply felt through the Christian world. Everywhere a spirit of feverish restlessness is abroad; men no longer are willing to walk in the old beaten paths. There is abroad a craving for novelty, and an ardent thirst for discovery. Theology is not exempted from this general scrutiny. And can we not see that this spirit of activity, if properly directed, must result in something really great and noble? Commencing in the clear light of revelation—progressing upon the recognized principles of Bible truth, to what higher views might the Church attain of the glorious plan of Redemption, and the wonderful dealings of God with man, both in providence and in grace! Yet may we not observe the tendency, in many quarters, to leave the high and comparatively unclouded region of Revelation—to cast aside the light gained to the world by the incarnation, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and to go back to the teaching of natural religion—to grope in the dark for the cords which bind earth to heaven, while under the clear light of Revelation alone they can be truly and easily discovered? This retrograde movement, after all the ingenuity it may affect, generally serves but to "darken counsel by words without knowledge." It would substitute the babblings of childhood for the strong wise words of Christian manhood, and would lead the world backwards to the feet of Socrates and Plato instead of directing it to those of Moses and of Christ. Follow in its course, and you are drifted away from that simple and strong