

## “CHRISTIANOS AD LEONES.”

[“The Christians to the lions” was the cry of the heathen populace in the days of the Roman emperors, when being thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre was a common punishment.]

'Tis bright, all bright before me, and the hours  
 Hasten me on to the eternal brightness,  
 The blest inheritance of the saints in light.  
 Sorrow is all behind me, and the beams  
 Of the fast coming day upon my soul  
 Kiss into glory all the clouds that hung  
 Once heavily o'er my path. How all is changed !  
 They linger now about me but to catch  
 And to throw back the dawn in radiance  
 Like to the rainbow glory round the throne.

O world, poor world, that didst not know thy Lord,  
 Nor value heaven's treasures in His hand,  
 Nor know the love that brought Him down to thee  
 Abased and emptied of the form of God !  
 That didst misdeem the lowliness of grace,  
 Which, saving others, could not save itself !  
 The Cross of shame, the Cross thou gavest Him,  
 Thou knewest not must be transformed when He,  
 The Holy One, hung on it ; knewest not  
 That death with all things else must own the One  
 Whom only man rejected,—that His death  
 Was but thy sentence, and His cross *thy* cross.

Poor world, that ne'er shall see such sight again,  
 The only glory and the only joy  
 Amid thy shadows is the lonely path  
 Of One who had not where to lay His head,  
 Of One who has ennobled poverty,  
 Made joy of sorrow and endear'd rejection.  
 Come to be with us, come not to be served,  
 But in the blest necessity of love  
 To serve even unto death, to serve for ever,

And link us with Himself in blessedness,  
The fruit of His own solitary toil.

O Son of God, yet Son of man forever !  
Thy tree of life is in these dark death-waters,  
And Marah is not Marah ! we can drink, —  
Yes, we, poor shrinking tremblers, we can drink,  
Of any cup Thy lips have pressed, and whence  
Thou hast drained all the bitterness. Death is gone,  
Behind me in thy Cross ; sin gone, wrath gone ;  
There is no wrath for me and no forsaking,  
For that was Thine ; but mine the Father's arms,  
Those arms that shut out trouble evermore,  
And shut me in to rest and joy and peace,  
Where He, my Father-God, in His own love  
Rests and rejoices in His lost one found.

Can there be sorrow that Thy path is mine ?  
That the disciple should be as his Lord ?  
What shadow could be dark beside the darkness  
That hung its noon-day shroud about the Cross ?  
What have I lost, but loss ?  
And if I have seen all my treasures landed  
Though by rough hands, upon the sunlit shore  
Which beckons me e'en now, — *they* are not lost,  
But laid up where can be no bankruptcy,  
To give me welcome home ! and there's no check,  
No weight to hinder in the eager race,  
I run not wearily, but still most glad  
That the end draweth near.

One only step, —  
One step and then ! . . . Why, farewell, Cæsar's prison ;  
Welcome the city of the jasper walls ;  
Welcome the portals of my Father's house ;  
Welcome the "ever" of my Saviour's presence ;  
Farewell the passing ; welcome the enduring ;  
Dying alone to death ! — One little hour !  
The beasts shall have their prey, and I my joy.

---

❖

**"LOSS."**

---

I think many fail to see just what the apostle means, when he says in Phillipians iii., that he

counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. "Counting" is faith; and faith is the God-opened eye, which simply realizes things as they are. It does not colour them. A good eye imparts nothing to the object it takes in, but only realizes it as it is, adding nothing, subtracting nothing.

The apostle was not magnanimously giving up what had real value in it. It was not even a generous self-abandonment, which does not count the cost of what it does. He *had* counted; and his quiet, calm, deliberate estimate is here recorded. Pursuing what he saw alone to have value, he says, "Yea, doubtless, and I do count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ [or "have Christ for my gain"], and be found in Him."

This is not "sacrifice," as people speak; for to make that, there must be worth (at least, in our eyes) in the thing we sacrifice. The apostle's deliberate conviction was that in his pursuit—entire, absorbing pursuit as it was—of Christ there was none. And this is the estimate which eternity will confirm, as the apostle's abundant experience—for *he* was no mere theorist—had already confirmed. To occupy himself with it would be loss indeed.

## THE DISMISSAL OF HAGAR.

GEN. XVI., XXI.

When Hagar was driven from the house of Abram by Sarah, the angel of the Lord met her, and told her to return and submit herself under the hand of her mistress. For it was very wrong in her to have acted in her mistress's house as if she had been the principal person there. She was a mother, it is true, and Sarah was still without a child. Nevertheless, she was but a servant; and acting in any other character, she entirely forgot her place. The angel, therefore, reproved her, ordered her to go back, and charged her, while she remained in Abram's house, to be in subjection to Sarah (Gen. xvi.).

This is a mystery. During the age of the law, two elements were found together—that of *law*, and that of *grace*. There were the demands of righteousness, addressing themselves to man, and there were “the shadow of good things to come,” the witnesses of grace, revealing God in Christ. The Jew who made the law the principal of the two, mistook God's mind; the Jew who used it subordinately, having his soul nourished by the tokens and witnesses of grace, was, so far, a Jew after God's own heart.

This right-minded Jew is seen, for instance, in Nehemiah (see Neh. viii.). The law was read on the first day of the seventh month; that day (as Lev. xxiii. 24 teaches us) in the Jewish year

which witnessed grace or revival. The two elements were, therefore, on that occasion, brought into collision. At the hearing of the law the congregation weep. But Nehemiah tells them not to weep, but to rejoice; and he tells them to do this on the authority of that day, the first day of the seventh month. And they do so, making the witness of grace principal, and using the law subordinately.

This was according to God.

In due time the Lord comes; and, in the course of His ministry, He settles the question, or rather verifies the decision already made, between these two contending elements (see Matt. xii. 5, 6). The Sabbath represents the rights and demands of the law, the priests in the temple witness the ways and provisions of grace. The Lord declares how the Sabbath had to yield to the Temple, whenever their rights interfered with each other. And this was as though He were the angel of Gen. xvi., telling Hagar to be under the hand of Sarah, while she remained in the house of Abram.

The apostle in Rom. ii., I judge, teaches the same; for he rebukes the Jew for making his boast of the law, not knowing the "goodness," i.e., the grace of God, in leading him to repentance. In the apostle's thought (of the Spirit surely), the Jew who was then refusing Christ and the gospel, was making the law *principal*, instead of using it as the servant of grace. He was resting in the law, ignorant of the riches of divine "goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering."

But we are to go further with the history and with the mystery of Hagar. In process of time, one of the conflicting parties in the house of Abraham has to leave it, as we say, for good. Hagar is dismissed a second time, and there is then no angel or angel's voice bidding her to go back. Sarah had now become a mother; and her son, the son of the freewoman, must occupy and fill the house all alone (chap. xxi.)

And this is a mystery also.

In this present age—in these days of the risen, glorified Jesus, when the Spirit has been given to the elect on the title of all their sins being forgiven and Jesus ascended—the law is not to appear. It has been nailed to the cross. We are dead to that wherein we were held (Rom. vii. 6, margin). The handwriting of ordinances has been blotted out (Col. ii. 14). The light and glory of the work of Christ must fill the house of God with one simple, bright, and gladdening element. Hagar has left Abraham's house, and left it for ever.

And as the Lord, in Matt. xii., was like the angel telling Hagar, that while she remained in the house she was to be subject to her mistress, so the apostle, in the epistle to the Galatians, is like Sarah insisting on Hagar quitting the house for ever. For it is now, in this age of a glorified Christ and of a given Spirit, no longer a mistress and a servant dwelling together under one roof, but a mother and her child, the freewoman and the heir. Scripture spoke in Sarah, as Gal. iv.

tells us. It was the Holy Ghost who gave the word. And whether we look at the zeal of Sarah in Gen. xxi., or the earnestness of Paul in Galatians, we learn the precious secret of the heart of God, that He will have His elect in the adoption and liberty of *children*. Relationship, as well as redemption, is of the grace in which we stand.



### GOD SEEING US, AND OUR SEEING GOD.

(HEBREWS XI. 27.)

“For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.”

If you compare this with an expression in Genesis xvi., I think the force of both is made much more distinct. “And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after Him that seeth me?” In the one case Moses sees God; in the other, although Hagar looks after Him, it was God that saw her. We are apt in everything to look at the lower end of the truth, to content ourselves with the scantiest portion that can sustain us.

Now Hagar did not really go beyond this. She was the bond woman; she knew nothing of the liberty of grace. She might look after God, but what she reached was this, “Thou God seest me.” Now the simple consciousness that God sees us, never goes beyond the knowledge either that He is a Judge, noticing our ways to deal with them, or, at most, that He is a guardian to protect in

the hour of difficulty and danger. But love, liberty, rest, joy in God, are never known through the bare truth that God sees us. No one denies it to be a truth ; but what I must maintain is, that, as believers, we are entitled to the further and more precious privilege of seeing God, of seeing Him who is invisible. This was, in the principle of it, what sustained the heart of Moses. Hagar did not endure. She ran away ; she was protected, she was brought back, she was finally expelled from the house of Abraham and Sarah, and the child of flesh along with her. It was the bondage of the law that was set forth by her. Now the law does bring out this—that is to say, God seeing man, God occupying Himself with man, God dealing with man, God judging man, yet God, it may be, showing mercy to man, as we see in Exodus xxxiv. But communion with God there never is nor can be, till there is the consciousness that grace reigns. Not that the law is weakened, dissolved, or destroyed ; not that its authority is touched. It is not so that God brings us into the place of liberty ; that would be to set the ways of God against His sovereign grace. But the believer is brought out of the region where law applies—out of the scene of death, and darkness, and bondage, into the place of light ; he is brought to God. There is no law in the presence of God. Law deals with the flesh in the world. If I am in the place of flesh and of the world, I must be under law or I shall be lawless. The Christian



is neither the one nor the other ; but he is brought in peace, by the grace of God, unto God. He endures, not because God sees him, but because he sees God. He endures "as seeing Him who is invisible." He endures, he knows God in Christ, he has rest in His presence, for he knows Him whom He has sent, and "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This is what He has done and what law could not do, for it has no propitiation to give. It may demand, but it has nothing to give ; it waits to receive, and it receives the deeds, alas ! of darkness, of fear, of feebleness ; it can only receive whatever poor man's conscience may offer, trying to make his peace with God. But grace makes the peace by a gift of His own love, gives the peace that it has made through the blood of Christ's cross, and brings into the consciousness of the love of Him who has suffered all for us. And therefore, instead of our being afraid of Him and avoiding Him, instead of its being a sort of guess-like way of wondering, doubting where it may end, fearing what it may bring, *endurance* is the word for us.

This is the portion of the Christian, this is what characterizes him. It is enduring "as seeing Him who is invisible." We know in Whom we have believed ; we know that we have eternal life. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him

that is true ; and we are in Him that is true, even in His son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." We endure "as seeing Him who is invisible." And so it is all the way through. The new life is fed, nourished and strengthened by faith, "while we look not at the things which are seen"—such are the things which flesh has to do with and law deals with. But we look not at these things, but "at the things which are not seen ; for the things that are seen are temporal ; but the things that are not seen are eternal." So, again, to the life itself. The law dealt with a man as long as he lived. We begin with the confession that we are dead ; and now we live in an eternal life. "And the life that I now live in the flesh"—not merely in heaven, but in this world—is "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." There is no uncertainty here ; whatever may be the practical testimony we bear to Him, there is no weakness nor failure in Him who is our life. There is endurance, but for us it is seeing Him who is invisible.

The Lord strengthen our faith !



### THE LORD JESUS IN JOHN XI., XII.

These chapters show us in what different channels the Lord's thoughts flowed from those of the heart of man. His ideas, so to speak, of *misery* and of *happiness*, were so different from what man's naturally are.

The eleventh chapter opens with a scene of human misery. The dear family at Bethany are visited with sickness, and the voice of health and thanksgiving in their dwelling has to yield to mourning, lamentation, and woe. But He, who of all had the largest and tenderest sympathies, is the calmest among them; for He carried with Him that foresight of resurrection, which made Him look beyond the chamber of sickness and the grave of death.

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He abode two days longer in the place where He was; but when that sickness ends in death, He begins His journey in the full and bright prospect of resurrection. And this makes His journey steady and undisturbed; and, as He approaches the scene of sorrow, His action is still the same. He replies again and again to the passion of Martha's soul, from that place where the knowledge of a power that was beyond that of death had, in all serenity, seated Him. And though He has to move still onward, there is no haste. For on Mary's arrival, He is still in the same place where Martha had met Him. And the issue, as I need not say, comes in due season to vindicate this stillness of His heart and this apparent tardiness of His journey.

Thus it was with Jesus here. The path of Jesus was *His own*. When man was bowed down in sorrow at the thought of death, He was lifted up in the sunshine of resurrection.

But the sense of resurrection, though it gave this peculiar current to the thoughts of Jesus, left His heart still alive to the sorrows of others. For His was not *indifference*, but *elevation*. And such is the way of faith always. Jesus weeps with the weeping of Mary and her company. His whole soul was in the sunshine of those deathless regions which lay far away from the tomb of Bethany; but it could visit the valley of tears, and weep there with those that wept.

But, again. When man was lifted up in the expectation of something good and brilliant in the earth, His soul was full of the holy certainty that death awaits all here, however promising or pleasurable; and that honour and prosperity must be hoped for only in other and higher regions. The twelfth chapter shows us this.

When they heard of the raising of Lazarus, much people flocked together from Bethany to Jerusalem, and at once hailed Him as the King of Israel. They would fain go up with Him to the Feast of Tabernacles, and antedate the age of glory, seating Him in the honours and joys of the kingdom. The Greeks also take their place with Israel in such an hour. Through Philip, as taking hold of the skirt of a Jew (Zech. viii.), they would see Jesus and worship. But in the midst of all this, Jesus Himself sits solitary. He knows that earth is not the place for all this festivation and keeping of holy day. His spirit muses on death, while their thoughts are full of a kingdom with its

attendant honours and pleasures. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone."

Such was the peculiar path of the spirit of Jesus. *Resurrection was everything to Him.* It was His relief amid the sorrows of life, and His object amid the promises and prospects of the world. It gave His soul a calm sunshine when dark and heavy clouds had gathered over Bethany; it moderated and separated His affections when the brilliant glare of a festive day was lighting up the way from thence to Jerusalem. The thought of it sanctified His mind equally amid grief and enjoyments around. Resurrection was everything to Him. It made Him a perfect pattern of that fine principle of the Spirit of God: "Let him that weepeth be as though he wept not, and he that rejoiceth as though he rejoiced not."

O for a little more of the same mind in us, beloved! A little more of this elevation above the passing conditions and circumstances of life!

May the faith and hope of the Gospel, through the working of the indwelling Spirit, form the happiness and prospects of our hearts!

---

## MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 100.)

*A Remnant.*

(Chapter XIII.)

The people having relapsed into unfaithfulness, were in subjection to enemies within—to the

Philistines, who were established in Israel's territory. It was the last stage in the history of declension. The children of Israel no longer cried to Jehovah; submitting to this state of things, they did not even wish to be delivered from it (chap. xv. 11), and, for the sake of living quietly in their state of servitude, sought to get rid of their liberator. The time of total apostasy was at hand.

In the midst of this irremediable state of things, God separated a godly *remnant*, and addressed his communications to them. Manoah and his wife feared Jehovah, listened to His voice and spake to one another (*cf.* Mal. iii 16), a striking type of the remnant—of the Marys, and Elizabeths, and Annas, and Zacharias, and Simeons—that waited for the true Messiah, the Saviour of Israel; type also of the future remnant, who, passing through the tribulation, will follow the paths of righteousness, waiting for the coming of their King.

Samson, the deliverer of Israel, found at his birth, not a people that welcomed him, but this godly couple who believed in his mission. The Lord, rejected by the people from the time of His arrival on the scene, found only a few faithful souls with whom He could enter into association, those excellent of the earth mentioned in Ps. xvi, in whom He found His delight. Times of irremediable ruin are then the times of remnants; this, consequently, applies to the present period of the

church—a period foretold by the Sovereign Prophet to His disciples, when He spoke to them of an assembly reduced to two or three gathered to the true centre, to the name of Christ, during His absence. This period is mentioned in Revelation, when—in presence of the idolatry of Thyatira, the deadness of Sardis, and the nauseating lukewarmness of Laodicea—the approbation of Him that is holy, of Him that is true, is pronounced upon the feeble separated remnant of Philadelphia.

That which characterizes a remnant at all times is *Nazariteship*, entire “separation unto the Lord.” The angel of Jehovah appearing unto the wife of Manoah, said to her: “Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not; but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing” (vs. 3, 4). This woman had to take upon herself nazariteship, because she was the vessel chosen of God to present to the people the promised deliverer. “For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head; for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines” (ver. 5). The nazariteship of Samson involved that of his mother. In order to do honour to the deliverer of Israel, it was needful for his witnesses to bear before the eyes of all, the impress of his own character. This is true at all times. If we do not manifest Christ down here

in His character of entire separation to God, we are not *witnesses* for our Saviour. Christ having come, permanent nazariteship should characterize the saints as it does the Lord; and the more the ruin increases, the more apparent will this become. The second epistle of Timothy, which tells us of the last days, is full of the characteristics of nazariteship. In chap. ii. 19, it is the Nazarite withdrawing from iniquity; in chap. ii. 21, it is his purifying himself for God; in chap. iii. 10, 11, and iv. 5-7, it is, as the servant of God, walking in forgetfulness of self and in absolute dependence on the Lord. Is it not the Nazarite who speaks in 2 Cor. iv. 7-12? In chap. vi.-vii. 1, of this same epistle we again find the principal traits of nazariteship; reproach and self-forgetfulness in vs. 4-10; separation from all association with the world in vs. 14, 15; cleansing from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit in chap. vii. 1. Quotations might be multiplied. What it is important to establish is, that there is for us, neither walk, nor testimony, nor service, without nazariteship; that is to say, without devotedness and separation to God.

In ver. 6, Manoah's wife told her husband about the angel's visit: "A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible; but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name." This poor woman had but little intelligence; she knew neither whence the angel came nor who he



was, nor did she ask him, proving how slight was her acquaintance with God. Far from giving her confidence, the presence of the God of promises frightened her, for she only saw the countenance of the angel to be "very terrible." Manoah himself, a man of sincere piety, had little understanding, but he desired more. He wished to know "what to do unto the child" (ver. 8), then, "what shall he do" (ver. 12, margin). Instead of answering his questions, the angel of Jehovah said to him: "Of all that I said unto *the woman* let her beware. *She* may not eat of anything that cometh of the vine, neither let *her* drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; all that I commanded *her* let *her* observe" (vs. 13, 14). Why? Because knowledge is not the first thing that God requires. Neither it, nor even true piety, such as was found in Manoah and his wife, is sufficient to keep us in the midst of the ruin. That which was needed for them *before knowledge* was true *personal separation* to God, a separation which had as its pattern and measure the nazariteship of him who was about to appear.

Other truths too—the portion of Christ's witnesses in a day of declension—are revealed to us here. "Manoah said unto the angel of Jehovah, What is thy name . . . . And the angel of Jehovah said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is *wonderful* (margin). So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered them upon a rock unto Jehovah; and the

angel did *wonderously*; and Manoah and his wife looked on " (vs. 17-19).

In reviewing the history of the different epochs of this book, we find that to each revival there are certain corresponding principles which characterize it. The times of Othniel, Ehud, Barak, Gideon and Jephthah, each furnishes us with some new principle; but God reserves the most precious truths of all for the last days of ruin, hidden until then and wonderful. How worthy of the God of love is such a way of acting! Knowing the difficulties of His own in the midst of increasing unfaithfulness and wishing to attract their hearts in the midst of this darkness, He brings to light and confides to His witnesses truths more and more glorious.

The starting point of these truths is *the sacrifice*. Manoah, more intelligent than Gideon (*cf.* chap. vi. 19), took the kid with the meat offering, and offered them upon a rock unto Jehovah. The cross is the foundation of all our knowledge as children of God. Manoah was desirous of knowing many things which Jehovah could not reveal to him before the sacrifice. But this foundation once laid, the angel did *wonderously*, which doubtless was revealed, in a manner still obscure and symbolical, to the eyes of this poor remnant who were waiting for a Saviour. "For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of Jehovah ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his

wife looked on " (ver. 20). They found in the fire of the sacrifice a new way, not opened up hitherto, a way for the representative of Jehovah to ascend to Him ; and, their gaze fixed on the angel, they saw a glorious person, whose dwelling place they knew now that he had disappeared from before their eyes. Then only, " Manoah knew that it was an angel of Jehovah " (ver. 21). The heart and the interests of this poor remnant were at that moment withdrawn from this world, and followed the angel, ascending with him to heaven. These simple believers could thenceforth speak of a *path* which led to heaven, and of a *person* who was there, who had become their object while they were still here below.

In this wonderful act another thing was revealed, not for Manoah, but *for us*: the future character of this nazaritiship of which the angel had spoken to them. It is now heavenly, as we have above remarked. The angel in parting from them went up into heaven. The Lord Jesus, rejected by the world, said: " For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth " (John xvii. 19). Set apart in heaven, He attracts us after, and fixes our eyes upon, Himself ; in order that the heavenly character of the One whom the world has rejected may be reproduced in us here below. In presence of this revelation, so instructive for us, but of which Manoah and his wife had but a faint glimpse, they " fell on their faces to the ground " (ver. 20).

And shall not we, in the midst of increasing darkness, adore in fuller measure, the God who has revealed to us, not only a heavenly and glorified Christ, but our place in Him, and has given Him to us as an object that we may reflect Him more perfectly in this world? Such are the blessings given to fill our hearts with joy and gratitude. How many Christians there are, who, seeking a place in the world, walk down here with bowed heads as they see the state of things around them, and vex their souls from day to day, as just Lot did of old—but such is not our part; we are not called to be Lots, nor to act like him down here. Our portion is with Abraham, the friend of God, who was not disheartened by the ruin. As a Nazarite he kept his place on his high mountain, his eyes fixed—not on Sodom, but—on the city which hath foundations. Jesus said of him: “Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it and was glad” (John viii. 56). Ah! rather than be discouraged, let us praise God, and thank Him for the heavenly treasure He has given us in Christ.

Like so many Christians of the present day, Manoah was filled with fear when he found himself in the presence of God. “He said to his wife, we shall surely die, because we have seen God” (ver. 22). His companion was a true helpmeet for him. Is there any room for fear, said she, when God has accepted our offering? The love of God, proved to us at the cross, is the positive guarantee for everything else. “He that spareth not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. viii. 32.)

*(To be continued, D.V.)*