

Israel's Inalienable Possessions:

***The Gifts and the Calling of God
which are without Repentance
(1906)***

By
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PREFACE.

THE substance of this booklet is an address, afterwards written out in amplified form for *The Scattered Nation*, whence, by request, it is now reprinted.

May the Great Shepherd of Israel bless this weak and inadequate effort to quicken interest in the hearts of Christians for the people still "beloved for the fathers' sakes," to whom He has never forgotten to be gracious even in the darkest hours of their long night of sorrow.

DAVID BARON.

CONTENTS.

- I. THE APOSTLE'S YEARNING LOVE FOR ISRAEL
- II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAME ISRAEL
- III. ISRAEL'S ADOPTION
- IV. THE SHEKINAH GLORY AND THE COVENANTS
- V. THE LAW-GIVING AND THE SERVICE OF GOD
- VI. THE PROMISES
- VII. WHOSE ARE THE FATHERS, AND OF WHOM IS CHRIST

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." Rom. ix:1-5.

"As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance." Rom. xi. 28, 29.

I

THE APOSTLE'S YEARNING LOVE FOR ISRAEL

**"For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren,
my kinsmen according to the flesh"**

FROM the height of blessedness to which the Apostle gradually leads us in the first, or doctrinal section of the Epistle, culminating as it does in the triumphant "No condemnation" and "No separation" to "them that are in Christ Jesus," we are here at the commencement of the dispensational, or prophetic section of the Epistle, almost abruptly brought down into a vale of sorrow, and we hear the Apostle speak of "great heaviness and uninterrupted sorrow in his heart."

And if the question be asked, Why this sudden descent from the mountain-top of blessedness? could not the Apostle have spared us the knowledge and the sorrow of this dispensational section of the Epistle, and have taken up the thread of his argument with the practical which begins with the 12th chapter? the answer is No! *For their own good* the Apostle could not leave Gentile believers in ignorance of the mystery of God with Israel. God's dealings with Israel, God's purposes in Israel, are subjects with regard to which Christians, for their own good, cannot afford to be ignorant.

The teaching imparted in this section of the Epistle—which was written for the express purpose of instructing Gentile believers about Israel—is not only salutary but absolutely needful, and though in the course of our study of these chapters, if our hearts be filled with the compassion of Christ, we too shall be filled with sorrow in contemplating Israel's present condition, yet we too are sure in the end to emerge with the Apostle with the triumphant, adoring exclamation, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" And our gain in the process will consist of enlarged views of God's character and a better understanding of God's ways—and, my dear friends, to the Christian there is no greater gain.

The first five verses of the 9th chapter form the introduction to this section of the Epistle, which consists of Chapters ix., x., and xi., and in these verses the Apostle Paul, before proceeding to vindicate the ways of God in His governmental dealings with Israel and the nations, stops to express his own sorrow and deep sympathy for that nation, which, though in the purpose of God exalted so high, is at present, through unbelief, fallen so low.

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost." By this solemn asseveration the Apostle wants, not only to impress us with the sincerity and truthfulness of his sorrow and sympathy for Israel, but to teach us that the feelings to which he gives utterance are no mere natural sentiments, such as a Jew might be supposed to have for his nation. He speaks as a man "in Christ," that is, as a man whose conscience, whose whole being, has been renewed and illumined,

and who, at the very time of writing, is conscious of being under the direct operation of God's Spirit. It is not as a natural man, but as a spiritual man; it is not as a Jew, but as an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile—it is as *an inspired Apostle* that he speaks, and he may therefore well serve as our pattern.

He says, "I have great heaviness (or, "I have great grief") and uninterrupted pain in my heart." The Apostle, my dear friends, had indeed drunk deeply of the Spirit of his Divine Master, our Lord Jesus, Who for our sakes became a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, Who was ever moved to compassion when He beheld the multitude of Israel, and Who wept over Jerusalem.

We may pause for a moment at this second verse, and ask ourselves, "How did this Divine sympathy, this Spirit-inspired grief, operate in his heart? What did it impel him to?" It impelled him first of all to *earnest prayer* and intercession on Israel's behalf.

"Brethren," he exclaims, at the beginning of the 10th chapter, "my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved"; or, more literally, "The good pleasure of my heart and supplication to God on behalf of Israel is for their salvation." "*The good pleasure of my heart*"—the Apostle found delight in prayer for Israel. I wonder of how many it is true now that they pray for Israel at all. And among those who are watchmen on the walls of Zion, and who do pray for Israel's salvation, I wonder of how many it can be said that it is done in "the good pleasure of their hearts," and not rather as a duty at the best. The Apostle found delight in his supplication for Israel, because it brought him so near to the heart of God, who has never ceased to yearn for His wandering people, and because his prayers sprang from sympathy with, and a deep understanding of, the purposes of God, not only to bless, but to make Israel yet the centre and channel of blessing for the whole earth.

But he not only prayed for them—his divinely-given sympathy for Israel impelled him also continually to *labour* for them. Paul was specially commissioned of God to preach the glad tidings of salvation through the crucified, risen Messiah to the Gentiles; yet, if we follow his missionary career, we find that wherever he went he always sought out the Jews first, and preached to them in their synagogues. "*It was necessary that the Word of God should first be spoken to you,*" he says in one place; and when the Jews in that city shut their ears and blasphemed, and he had to turn to the Gentiles, we read that in the very next place which he visited, Iconium, he and Barnabas went again together into the synagogue, "and so spake that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." And this we find to be the case to the end of his career. And he not only preached the Gospel to them, but he cared for the temporal necessities of the believing Israelites; and when a famine broke out in Judea he was the first to raise his voice among the Gentile Churches which he had founded, calling upon them to help these believing Jews, and reminding them that "if the Gentiles had been made partakers in their spiritual things, it was their duty also to minister to them in carnal things."

But even all his labours and all his prayers did not fully express his yearning love and desire for Israel. He went much further. This is brought out in the 3rd verse. What a wonderful verse this is! "*For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*" Shrink as we may, my dear friends, from the full meaning of these fervent words of the Apostle, sure it is that no other meaning will sufficiently satisfy the plain sense of the words, than that the Apostle actually went the length of wishing, if it had been possible, and if Christ had permitted it, to be himself cut off from Christ in the place of his people.

"The wish," says Dean Alford, "is evidently not to be pressed as entailing on the Apostle the charge of inconsistency in loving his nation more than his Saviour. It is the expression of an affectionate and self-denying heart, willing to surrender all things, even, if it might be, eternal life itself, if thereby he could obtain for his beloved people these blessings of the Gospel which he now enjoyed, but from

which they were excluded. . . . Others express their love by professing themselves ready to give their life for their friends; he declares the intensity of his affection by reckoning even his spiritual life not too great a price if it might purchase their salvation.”

In this respect there are two men in the history of Israel who stand nearest to Christ for their willingness to sacrifice themselves for their people. One was Moses, who, after the apostasy of Israel in the matter of the golden calf, prayed to God, “Yet now if Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of the book which Thou hast written.” And the other was this Apostle, who said, “I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

And remember, my dear friends, that the man who gives us this glimpse into the intensity of his heart's love and yearning for Israel is the one who next to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, has suffered most at the hands of his people. Again and again, as he was proclaiming to them the fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers in God's gift of His only begotten Son, they cried: “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live!” Five different times did they lay many stripes upon him in their synagogues; they hunted him from place to place; wherever they could, they stirred up tumults against him; they beat him, they stoned him, they heaped all sorts of reproaches and blasphemies upon him; and what pained him perhaps most of all was that they tried by all the means in their power to frustrate his Apostolic commission, “forbidding him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles that they might be saved.”

And yet, all through, and to the end, not only had he no inclination or desire to “accuse his nation” before the Gentiles (Acts xxviii. 19), but he never ceased to love them and to yearn for them. Truly such love sprang from no mere natural or human source, but was part of that wonderful, everlasting, unchangeable love of Jehovah toward the children of Israel, which even all their many sins and apostasies could never quench, and was drawn by the Apostle from the great heart of his Divine Master, who wept over Jerusalem, and who, even on the cross, prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

And it is only in this spirit of a love which never faileth, and of Christ-like compassion, that we too shall be able to persevere in our prayers and in our efforts for the salvation of gainsaying, disobedient Israel, else we shall soon turn away from them discouraged if not embittered, as has been the case, alas! with some who began well, but whose knowledge of this peculiar people has been shallow, and whose interest did not rest on the deep-enough basis of an intelligent understanding of God's will and purposes, and was not impelled by the all-constraining love of Christ, which alone can prevail.

“A parallel case,” as Dr. Adolph Saphir observed in one of his last addresses on this subject, “is this: Jesus asks Peter, ‘Lovest thou Me?’ then He says, ‘Feed My sheep.’ It is not love to the sheep that will sustain Peter in feeding them. It is the fact that they are Christ's sheep. It is not because the sheep are lovable that his interest in them will continue. It is because Christ is lovable. Likewise, unless you believe that *Israel is God's nation*, and your interest is based on the Word of God, your efforts to evangelise among Israel will soon languish, and your patience will be exhausted.”

To return to the Apostle's willingness to sacrifice himself for his nation, I would remind you that neither a Paul nor a Moses, nor even an archangel, could suffice for the redemption of the people, or of even one soul in Israel. *One* there is Whose death alone is a sufficient ransom, and He not only “wished,” but *was* actually made a curse for us, that we might be freed from the curse of sin and the law.

Yes, *it was necessary*, not on the ground of human “expediency,” as Israel's apostate high priest expressed it; but because of a *Divine necessity*, springing from the eternal principles of God's moral

government of the world, that the Christ Himself "should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not " (John xi. 49-52).

And Jesus *did* die for that nation, and in that great and wonderful fact rests the certainty of Israel's future salvation. But blessed be His Name, He died, not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad, which ensures also the *eternal* salvation of every one of His people individually, of whatever nation, who have been brought to faith and reliance on Him.

II

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAME ISRAEL

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel"

THE chief reasons of the Apostle's interest in and love for Israel are given to us in verses 4 and 5. These two verses practically summarise "the gifts and the calling of God" of which he speaks in the 29th verse of the 11th chapter, and which are "without repentance," that is, without a change of mind on God's part—the gifts or privileges and the high calling, namely, which God *irrevocably* bestowed on the chosen people, and which are Israel's inalienable possessions. And these reasons, my dear friends, still remain, and they are the permanent grounds why we now should be interested in and love Israel. As we examine Israel's divinely bestowed gifts and calling, as summarised in these verses, I beg you to note that we have here a gradation in these privileges, culminating in the last, which is the highest and greatest.

The first is expressed in the words, "*who are Israelites.*" This is the name of honour given by God to Jacob. It is, I may say, the ideal and *prophetic* name of Israel in the future, into the full meaning of which they will only enter after they shall have passed through the same experience which Jacob had made on that night when his name was changed from Jacob to Israel.

Let me remind you of that mysterious transaction recorded in Gen. xxxii. 22-32. In "that night," in anticipation of his meeting with his brother Esau, when his heart was full of anxiety and fear, Jacob, after taking his family and all he had over the brook Jabbok, "was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when He (this mysterious man) saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, Let Me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me. And He said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked and said, Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name. And He said, Wherefore dost thou ask after My name? And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh."

This historical incident forms at the same time one of the most beautiful parables of God's present and future dealings with Israel; and Jacob may, in this mysterious and wonderful transaction, be very well regarded as the type of his whole posterity. This, my dear friends, is the "night" period of Israel's history; and a long, dark, and dreary night it has proved—full of sorrow and of weeping, which will not cease till joy is ushered in, in that looked-for morning, by the sudden rising upon them of the Sun of Righteousness.

And it is still the "Jacob" period of Israel's history. Not yet are they as a nation "Israelites"—princes having power with God and with men, and prevailing. There have indeed always been individuals among them to whom the Lord Himself could bear witness and say: "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile"; but as a *nation* it is the "Jacob" name which still applies to them. And there is a man wrestling with them—unknown, His Name not yet revealed to them—it is "the Man Christ Jesus"; it is the Messiah, the Angel of the Covenant.

What are all God's dealings with them as a people? What are these chastisements—the various strokes which they receive in this their night of sorrow? Are they not all God's wrestlings with them, with a view to bringing this national Jacob to an end of himself. But we read that Jacob withstood, even as

the nation withstands now, until, finally, before the breaking of the morning—in the last dark hour of the dark night of which we read in the prophetic Scriptures—in that final sorrow and “great tribulation” which is to come upon them, Jacob's thigh shall finally be out of joint; and then all that they shall be able to do will be to cleave to Him, the Mighty One, and say, “We cannot—we will not—let Thee go, except Thou bless us.” And then, having been overcome, they shall be overcomers.

In Hosea xii. 3, 4, we have light thrown on this mysterious transaction. There we read that Jacob “by his strength had power with God; yea, he had power over the angel and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto Him. He found Him in Bethel, and there He spake with us;” from which we see, not only the true character of the mysterious “Man” who wrestled with him that night, that He was none other than the Divine Angel of the Covenant, in and through whom all the theophanies of the Old Testament took place—the Eternal Son of God, Who in the fulness of time became flesh and dwelt among us, that men may behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; but we are also let into the secret as to how Jacob, after he was first of all prevailed over, had power with God and over the Angel, “and prevailed.” *“He wept and made supplication unto Him.”* He wept over his past—over the corruption of his nature and the crookedness of his life, which he confessed when he said, “My name is Jacob”; and he “made supplication” for pardon and grace and for the power of a new life when he clung to the Angel, saying, “I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.”

This is how Jacob became “Israel”—a prince having power with God; this is how he “prevailed”—in the same way as the helpless little child prevails over the strong father whom he has offended or grieved; not by resisting him, or making excuses for his sin, but by throwing himself into his father's arms in penitent sorrow and love.

This is how we, too, may become spiritual Israelites. My friends, have we all passed through such an experience? Have we confessed and wept over our past, and by faith laid hold on God's strength and made supplication unto Him, saying, “I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me”? Then we know what *conversion* means; then only do we know the meaning of that word, “for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”

And that is how the whole Jewish people shall at last enter into the meaning of the name “Israel,” which was divinely bestowed on them. Oh, what a day that will be when “the spirit of grace and of supplications” is poured upon Israel, and when the whole nation confesses and weeps over its past. What are many of the psalms and prophecies? What is that wonderful 53rd chapter of Isaiah but inspired future penitential confessions of repentant Israel? Yes; “in that day shall there be a *great mourning* in Jerusalem, . . . and the land shall mourn, . . . all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.”

And this sorrow and weeping will be accompanied by supplications and by a clinging in faith to the promises of God—“But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father: we are the clay and Thou our Potter; and we all are the work of Thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever; behold, see, we beseech Thee, we are all Thy people.” “Turn us again, O Jehovah, God of Hosts, cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved” (Isa. lxiv. 8, 9; Psa. lxxx. 19).

Then it is that “worm Jacob” shall become “Israel,” strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, having power with God and with men, and prevailing. Then also will Israel see “Peniel” again—which means the “Face of God,” which now is hid from them in consequence of their sins, but which they shall yet behold in greater glory and favour than before, when the Sun of Righteousness shall rise upon them in the glorious appearing of their Messiah-King.

It is interesting to observe that the Apostle himself was proud of the name “Israel”—“Are they

Israelites?” he says, “so am I”—“for I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin”: and truly he knew from experience the full significance of the name, for, after the persecuting Saul, who had so long resisted Christ, had been conquered and turned into Paul, he became a true prince among men, having in a measure, even unsurpassed by prophets and apostles, “power with God and with men, and prevailing.”

III

ISRAEL'S ADOPTION

"Israel is My son, My firstborn"

THE second of the irrevocable gifts or privileges included in Israel's high calling of God, as enumerated by the Apostle in this scripture, is expressed in the words, "To whom pertaineth the adoption," or more literally, "the sonship." At the very beginning of their national history, when God sent Moses to bring them out of Egypt, His word to Pharaoh was, "Israel is My son, My firstborn, and I say unto thee, Let My son go, that he may serve Me."

Thus Jehovah avouched them in a special sense as His peculiar people—His firstborn from among the nations; and all His subsequent self-revelations to them, and all His dealings with them, were designed to teach them what is implied in this blessed relationship; what it means in the spirit and in truth to pronounce the word "Abba." Hitherto, though Israel has had this most precious Name of God much on their lips, they have not as a nation entered experimentally into its meaning, nor have they as yet corresponded to the character of "children of the living God." There, has, indeed, always been the little remnant according to the election of grace, who worshipped God in the spirit and in truth, and who by the spirit of adoption which was in them cried, "Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; Thou, O Jehovah, art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy Name is from everlasting" (Isa. lxiii. 16); but to the people as a whole the words uttered by Malachi to the priests may well be applied: "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith Jehovah of Hosts."

One of the most pathetic complaints of God against Israel in this connection is to be found in Jeremiah iii. 4. In the first verses of that chapter He reminds them of their many grievous sins and apostasies from Him—of their spiritual adultery, which, if He dealt with them according to law, would be sufficient to separate them from Him for ever; but being full of compassion, He is willing to forgive all the past, and cries, "Yet return again to Me, saith Jehovah."

Then follow those wonderful words which give us a glimpse into the yearning and love of His heart for His people, and show us His longing that they should at last understand and enter experimentally into the relations in which He stood to them according to His covenants and promises: "Wilt thou not from this time (Wilt thou not now at last) cry unto Me, Abi ('my Father')—Thou art the Guide of my youth?" The word, "*alluph*," translated here "guide," is the same as in Prov. ii. 17, where it is used of the "strange" adulterous woman who forsaketh "*the guide of her youth*, and forgetteth the covenant of her God"—a truer rendering, however, of which would be: "Who forsaketh the gentle *mate*, or friend (or *husband*), of her youth"; and so, by this act forgetteth or breaketh, the covenant of her God.

Now these were the two great and blessed relationships into which God had entered with His people—that of a father to his son, and that of a husband to his wife. In both of these Israel has thus far proved unfaithful. As a Father, God has to complain of His disobedient and gainsaying people, that they are "children who have corrupted themselves" and become corrupters (Isa. i. 4): and as a Husband He has to pour out His heart's grief and ever so many times at Israel's spiritual adulteries, because she "had played the harlot with many lovers." But, blessed be His holy Name, our God abides faithful and true, though men always prove liars, "He will ever be mindful of His covenant" (Psa. cxi. 5); and in spite of all our disobedience and apostasy He has never ceased to be "a Father to Israel," or to call Ephraim His "firstborn" (Jer. xxxi. 9, 20). And in the end Israel will at last enter experimentally into the blessedness of both these relationships.

It is beautiful to note in that same third chapter of Jeremiah, where, in the second part, a glimpse is given us of the future—when Jerusalem shall be called the throne of Jehovah—we read, “But I (Jehovah) said, How shall I put thee among the children and give thee a goodly heritage of the hosts of the nations? and I said, *Ye shall call Me, Abi* ('my Father'), and shall not turn away from following Me” (vers. 17-19). “Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, Abi?”

Not yet has Israel as a nation apprehended that for which they were apprehended of God; not yet has the people as a whole responded to their high calling and looked up to the God of heaven and earth, crying, “My Father.” But to them pertaineth the *huiiothesia*—the sonship, and in the end Jehovah has pledged Himself to bring them actually and experimentally, into this blessed relationship.

“And I said”—it is His irrevocable purpose “*ye shall call Me, Abi*”—for He who has called them to be “His son, His firstborn,” will pour the spirit of adoption—the spirit of filial fear and of love into their hearts, so that they shall be *obedient* children and shall “no more turn away from following after Him.”

So also that other near and precious relationship of the Bride to the Bridegroom, or of the Wife to the Husband, to which Israel was called, shall yet become an actual experimental reality in their experience; for after Israel repents of her past unfaithfulness and returns to her “first (or lawful) husband” (Hosea ii.), we read: “Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate ; but thou shalt be called ‘My Delight is in her,’ and thy land ‘Married’; for Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy Builder¹ marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee” (Isa. lxii. 4, 5).

Meanwhile, during this period of Israel's unfaithfulness and disobedience, there is a remnant according to the election of grace from that nation, and a people taken out for His Name from among the Gentiles, who enter into the enjoyment of those very “gifts,” or high privileges, to which Israel was called. To us, too, if we be Christ's, belongeth the *huiiothesia*—the sonship—“for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they are the sons of God*. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of sonship, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit *that we are the children of God*” (Rom. viii. 14-16).

I was recently asked by a friend, a Scotch evangelist, as to the meaning of the repetition of the word “Father” in this passage, and also in Gal. iv. 6. There is meaning and beauty in it. “Abba” is, of course, the Hebrew for “Father”; and *Ho Pater*, which immediately follows, is the Greek for the same word: and the repetition in the two languages is in keeping with the character of the Church in this dispensation, in which there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, who, through Christ, have access together by One Spirit unto the Father; for the same Holy Spirit which creates in the believing Israelite the spirit of sonship and teaches him to cry in his language, “Abba,” fulfils the same blessed mission in the heart of the Greek believer—the Greek standing in the New Testament as the representative of the Gentiles—and teaches him to cry in his language, *Ho Pater*.

1 An ancient alternative reading for "thy son." The word for "son" and "builder" is the same in Hebrew.

IV

THE SHEKINAH GLORY AND THE COVENANTS

"The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night departed not from before the people"

"Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant"

THE third of the "gifts" enumerated in our Scripture as constituting part of Israel's high calling of God, is expressed in the words, "and the glory." This, of course, refers to the glory of the personal Presence of Jehovah in their midst, which distinguished and separated Israel from all other peoples (Ex. xxxiii. 16)—that wonderful Shekinah, the visible symbol of which was the cloud of glory and pillar of fire, which went before them in all their wilderness experiences, and which never utterly left them, in spite of all their frowardness and sins; the glory which in the Tabernacle and in the first Temple dwelt between the cherubim, as the visible demonstration of His covenant relations with that people.

Well may their great lawgiver exclaim, in view of this special relationship of Jehovah to His people, "Happy" (or, "oh, how happy," or "blessed") "art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by Jehovah, the Shield of thy help, and who is the Sword of thy excellence"—"for ask now of the days that are past which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other where hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire as thou hast heard, and live? or hath God assayed to go and take Him a nation by temptations, by signs and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that Jehovah your God did for you?" (Dent. xxxiii. 29; iv.32-34).

At present, and ever since the commencement of "the Times of the Gentiles" with the Babylonish captivity, the glory has departed from Israel, and since then the word "Ichabod" is written over their whole history. "Where is the glory?"—their land is laid waste, their Temple destroyed, themselves scattered and tossed about among the nations. But this "Ichabod" period will not last for ever.

The same prophet, Ezekiel, who in the earlier chapters of his prophecy describes the slow, reluctant departure of the glory of Jehovah from the midst of His people, sees also its return from the same direction from which he saw it depart—a vision, this, of the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, when His blessed "feet" shall "in that day" stand again "upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east."

But when the glory of the personal Presence of Jehovah-Jesus shall thus be revealed so that all flesh may see it together, even as the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken—Israel and Jerusalem will again be the centre of it, and the word will yet go forth: "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitress of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel *in the midst of thee*" (Isa. xii. 6). Not till then, not till "*out of Zion*, the perfection of beauty, God doth shine," will the ancient promise be fulfilled, that the glory of Jehovah shall cover this earth even as the waters cover the sea: "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples, but Jehovah shall rise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee, and (then) nations shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa. lx. 1-3). Truly great and wonderful is the "gift," or privilege, expressed in the words, "*theirs is the glory.*"

"*And the Covenants.*"—This is the fourth item in the summary of the "gifts and calling" which God

irrevocably bestowed upon the chosen nation; and at the remembrance of it the Psalmist may well sing:

"Glory ye in His Holy Name;
Let the heart of them rejoice that seek Jehovah, . . .
He remembers His covenant for ever,
The word which He commanded to a thousand generations—
Which (covenant) He made with Abraham.
And His oath unto Isaac;
And confirmed the same unto Israel for an everlasting covenant;
Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan,
The lot of your inheritance."

(Psa. cv. 3-12.)

Yes, this covenant with Abraham still stands, and will "to a thousand generations," for it was absolute and unconditional, and was renewed again and again to Isaac and to Jacob, and confirmed by oath by the God who cannot lie, and who pledged His own existence for its certain fulfilment. And one chief item guaranteed in this covenant is Israel's ultimate permanent possession of the land of Canaan as the lot of their inheritance," so that we may confidently look forward to the certain fulfilment of it, in spite of those who, in opposition to God's promise and oath, boldly deny that the Jews ever will be restored, or that there is a national future for Israel at all.

But it is not only that one unconditional everlasting covenant which He made with Abraham, and which He renewed to Isaac and Jacob, that the Apostle has in his mind. "Theirs are the *covenants*," he says—for all the covenants which God, in His great condescension, made with man since Abraham, were made with them, and primarily belong to them.

Christians sometimes speak of the Jews as the "people of the *Old Covenant*," in contradistinction to themselves as the people of "the *New Covenant*"; but we have only to turn up the original records of the new covenant to see that, nationally, God did not make this covenant with the English, or French, or Germans, or Russians; but "the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant *with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah*: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, though I was an husband unto them, saith Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel. After those days, saith Jehovah, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah; *for I will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more*" (Jer. xxxi. 31-34).

It is true that, as *individuals*, men of all nations are, through their union with our Lord Jesus Christ, grafted on to the olive tree of Israel's covenanted mercies, and, together with the remnant of the nation, even now partake of the root and fatness of the Jewish olive tree—thus anticipating the time when "all Israel shall be saved" (Heb. viii.). But this inclusion of Gentile believers who were formerly "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise," in no wise affects the purpose of God in relation to Israel *nationally*. Theirs are "the covenants"; and as sure as there is a God of truth, every item and promise in those covenants, from the highest and greatest contained in the words—"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more; I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be My people; they shall all know Me from the least of them unto the greatest of them"—down to the minutest promise in reference to the possession of their land, and their future national prosperity in it, shall all be fulfilled in His own good time.

V.

THE LAW-GIVING AND THE SERVICE OF GOD

"Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgements and true laws, good statutes and commandments"

THE next step in the gradation of the great "gifts" which God bestowed upon Israel is expressed in the words, "*and the giving of the Law,*" or "the Law-giving." I fear Christians, generally, would not count this among the gifts or privileges of Israel; but such a derogatory estimate of the Law shows a very shallow view also of the Gospel. The New Testament never speaks disparagingly of the law. On the contrary, it tells us that the law is "good," and "holy," and "spiritual"; only that in the unregenerated man it becomes weak and ineffectual by reason of the weakness and carnality of the flesh.

"The Law-giving"—oh, what a wonderful event that was in the history of the world and of Israel, when Jehovah came forth from Sinai and burst forth (as the rising sun) from Seir unto them, when He shined forth from Mount Paran, and came with myriads of His holy ones, bringing in His right hand a fiery law unto them (Deut. xxxiii. 2). What a light that was which then, for the first time, shone upon the moral darkness of this earth! True, it was not, nor was it meant to be, "the Light of Life." Much more did it become by reason of sin, and our innate corruption which it reveals—a consuming fire and the minister of death. Yet it was "glorious" (2 Cor. iii. 7), for it was a revelation of God's holiness and a perfect transcript of His holy will. It was also a necessary *precursor* of the Light of Life, and was meant to be our schoolmaster unto Christ; that is, teach us *our need* of a Saviour, and to set us longing for the redemption to be accomplished by Him.

I am often grieved at the ignorant use and popular perversion of a beautiful scripture. I refer to the Apostle's saying, "For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. iii. 6), which is often quoted by some as an excuse for a disregard of the literal sense, or even for a destructive handling of the letter of Scripture. But the Apostle plainly uses the term "letter" for the law—the letter "written and graven in stones"; and, my dear friends, this "letter"—this wonderful revelation of God's absolute holiness and of the requirements of His holy government—is meant to kill us, and must kill us, before the Spirit can come and give us life. "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up. He maketh poor, and maketh rich. He bringeth low, and lifteth up."

That is ever His process, and there is no other way; and if, by the revelation of His holiness and your own inability and innate corruption, you have not, like Paul, been brought to an end of yourself, and to cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" if the Law of God has not, like a two-edged sword, pierced and broken your heart, you do not know the full sweetness and preciousness, and the life-giving power of the Gospel.

"And the Giving of the Law"—and the greatness and beauty of this wonderful "gift," which constitutes part of Israel's high calling, will not be fully manifest till, in the millennial period, the Law is put in their inward parts, and written *on their hearts* when the final end, which God had in the "Law-giving"—namely, that His people may be holy, because He is holy—shall be accomplished, and the earth shall see, for the first time in its history, a whole nation upon whose life, and conduct, and possessions, shall be written, "Holiness to Jehovah."

Together with "the Giving of the Law," the Apostle names "*the Service of God*" as the next step in the gradation of Israel's special privileges. This refers to the Divine institutions of their Tabernacle and Temple; the Divinely-appointed ritual of which I cannot describe here, but which so beautifully and in

such a variety of ways sets forth the blessed Person and redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This richly symbolical and beautiful "Service of God" may be said to constitute "*the Gospel in the Law*," for it already pointed the way how a man who stood condemned and separated from God by the moral law, could yet draw near to Him—namely, on the ground of shed blood, and by the ministry and intercessions of the high priest; and in reference to the future it is probable that, by the temporary restoration of a modified form of this Divinely-appointed "Service of God," which is forecast in the prophetic Scriptures, Israel shall yet teach the spared of the nations the deep significance of their ancient types, and open to them the fulness and manifoldness of the atoning work of their Messiah.

"The Service of God": I would only add that it is not recorded in the Mosaic writings, and described with such minuteness of detail for our *imitation* now, as some ignorantly think who seek to set up an unauthorised human *mimicry* of Israel's Divinely-appointed ritual in the Tabernacle and Temple, and thereby pervert the simplicity of the Gospel and of Christian worship; but it is recorded for our *study*, that we may perceive the spiritual significance of these types and shadows, and learn more and more the fulness which dwells in Christ for us.

VI

THE PROMISES

"Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers"

"AND the Promises." This constitutes another of God's great and irrevocable "gifts" to Israel. Perhaps the great Abrahamic promises with regard to the land and the promised seed, in whom *all* families of the earth should be blessed, are uppermost in the Apostle's mind—the promises which are unfolded and amplified in the words of God subsequently spoken to Isaac and to Jacob, and, later, to the whole people, through Moses and the prophets, and which are wonderful and comprehensive in their scope; and are God's guarantees for the blessing of Israel, and through Israel, for all the nations of the earth.

Now, on this point, especially professing Christendom, and many true Christians even in Protestant countries, have through ignorance been at variance with the Apostle and with the clearly revealed mind of God. The general belief of Christians for many centuries has been that the promises made to Israel have, in consequence of their rejection of Christ, been either annulled or bodily transferred to the Church. This has arisen from the erroneous belief that God hath utterly cast off His people which He hath foreknown, and that there is no more a national future for the Jewish nation.

"The attitude of such Christians in relation to the Jews has been humorously illustrated by that prominent Jewish witness for Christ, the late Joseph Rabinowitch, in the following story: During the last Russo-Turkish war, after a great battle, a certain number of men in a particular regiment were returned in the list as dead, and an officer with a company of soldiers was commissioned to attend to the sad duty of seeing them decently buried.

"While engaged in this task, they came across a poor man who was badly wounded, and left on the field for dead, but who had life enough in him to refuse to be buried. But the amusing part of the business was that the officer in command seemed very much perplexed. He asked the poor man's name, looked at his list, and then said, 'Well, I do not know what to do with you; in my list you are put down as dead.' This, Mr. Rabinowitch said, is the attitude of many Christians in relation to the Jew.

"In their political and religious creeds, the Jews as a nation are put down as *dead*, and even many true Christians, when reading in the Scriptures the exceeding great and precious promises which God made to Israel, say, 'Oh yes, *Israel*—that is a nation that once lived, but died some nineteen centuries ago, when they rejected Christ, and now "Israel" means no longer Israel, but the Church which has entered into their inheritance.' But Israel, though seriously wounded, is not dead, and refuses to be buried; and the remarkable signs of vitality which as a people they are now manifesting are in themselves sufficient to show that they are not merely a nation of the past, but pre-eminently the nation of the future."²

When the Apostle Paul wrote these words, Israel had already rejected Christ, and it was on that account that he pours out the great sorrow and uninterrupted pain of his heart, yet—and this is one great purpose he had in writing these three chapters—he proceeds to show how that, though all men *be* liars, God abides faithful, and that His gifts and calling of Israel (in spite of all that has happened) are "without repentance" or a change of mind on His part.

Therefore, it is with design that he says, not that they *were* Israelites, and that to them *belonged* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, and the promises: but who *are*

2 Quoted from my book, "The Ancient Scriptures and the Modern Jew."

Israelites, and that theirs still *are* all these gifts which constitute their high calling, for God hath *not* cast off the people which He had foreknown; and though the majority of many generations of Israel may exclude themselves through unbelief from *enjoyment* of these great privileges, they are reserved in the purpose of God against the time when "all Israel shall be saved," and when, through Christ, they shall experience nationally what we now experience individually, that *all* the promises of God, "how many soever they be," and whether relating to spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, or to national and "temporal" blessings in earthly places in Canaan—"in Him is the yea" of verification, "and through Him also is the Amen" of response and of experience "to the glory of God through us" (2 Cor. ii. 20).

Meanwhile, far from the death of our Lord Jesus being the occasion for the cancelling or annulling of the promises made to Israel, the Apostle assures us that "Christ was made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God *that He might confirm* the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. xv. 8); and since they have been ratified with His own precious blood, they have been made doubly sure, and can never fail.

I am speaking to Christians, and do not want to be misunderstood. I believe that there is not a promise in reference to spiritual blessing which the least and weakest believer in Christ may not apply and enjoy as if uttered to himself, and (as I said elsewhere) remember that in all His words and acts to Israel the heart of Israel's God is opened up to you, whoever you may be, who have learned to put your trust under the shadow of His wings. For this God is your God for ever and ever—the Father of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who wants you to learn from His infinite grace and faithfulness to His unworthy Israel that His faithfulness to you, too, can never fail.

But what I want you to know is that your inclusion into promises made to Israel in no way alters the meaning and force of the words as primarily uttered to that nation, and that you can be no gainer, but rather much of a loser, by the so-called spiritualising, or *phantomising*, method of interpreting Scripture, by which "Zion," "Israel," "Jerusalem," etc., are explained to mean the "Church," or "heaven"—a method which is largely responsible for the fact that the Bible, especially the prophetic Scriptures, has become a sealed book to the majority of professing Christians, who in consequence become an easy prey to every wind of false doctrine, or to the specious rationalism in relation to God's Word which now, alas! permeates the Churches.

"Theirs are the promises," and not one thing that God spake will ever fail—"For thus saith Jehovah, like as I brought all this great evil upon this people [and so *literally* fulfilling all the threatenings and curses which He had uttered against them], so will I bring upon them *all the good that I promised them.*" "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities, and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth unto Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." And then, when Jehovah "hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel, all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God" (Jer. xxxii. 42; Mic. vii. 19, 20; Psa. xcvi. 3).

VII

WHOSE ARE THE FATHERS, AND OF WHOM IS CHRIST

"As touching the election they are beloved for the fathers' sakes"

"Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham"

WE are now approaching the climax in the gradation of the great "gifts" and high privileges which are parts of Israel's calling. The next step is, "*Whose are the fathers.*" Oh, my friends, whenever you want to have your hearts stirred afresh with love and interest for Israel, think of "the fathers." Think of Abraham, "the friend of God," who was strong in faith and staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, and so became a pattern of faith and obedience to all the family of God; think of Isaac, who was willing to be put on the altar of burnt-offering, and so became a type of Christ, "the Lamb of God"; think of Jacob, who became "Israel"; of Joseph, the beautiful type of our Lord Jesus in His purity of life and in His sufferings and exaltation; of Moses, the great law-giver, who was willing to sacrifice himself for his nation.

Think of the company of Israel's prophets and psalmists, whose words you continually use as the expressions of your deepest feelings of penitence, faith, devotion, and praise. Think of those "elders" who, "through faith obtained a good report," and whose paintings are hung up in God's picture gallery of his heroes, for the admiration and imitation of all ages, in that wonderful eleventh chapter to the Hebrews. No wonder that we read that they are still beloved of God for their fathers' sakes (Rom. xi. 28). Christendom has forgotten the relation between these poor wandering Jews in their midst and their noble fathers who form the true aristocracy of all times.

I am reminded of an amusing incident which happened a few years ago. A clergyman who was much interested in the Jews was spending his summer holiday in a small out-of-the-way place in Schleswig-Holstein. Being anxious to create an interest in God's people, he gathered a number of the peasants together one day and gave them an address, in the course of which he reminded them of their obligations as Christians to the Jewish people. He spoke of Israel's past history, and how through them were given to us the oracles of God. Then he proceeded to speak of the "fathers" and the prophets; and finally came to the New Testament, and observed that the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, too, were all Jews.

At this point he was interrupted by one of the peasants, who stood up at the end of the room and said, "I beg your pardon, sir, this is a mistake; Jesus Christ had twelve apostles, but only one was a Jew, and that was Judas." I fear that poor ignorant peasant gave expression to the practical thought of multitudes in Christendom. They remember Judas, and readily associate him with the Jewish people; but they forget that Peter and Andrew, and James and John, and Philip and Bartholomew, and Paul and Nathanael, and all the other apostles were also men of Israel.

Alas! there are still Judases among the Jews as there are among the Gentiles, and they are sometimes to be found even among the professed followers and "apostles" of Christ; but, blessed be God, there are also still those who answer to John—disciples whom Jesus loves, and Nathanaels to whom He Himself bears witness: "Behold Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile"; and Pauls and Apollos—men "mighty in the Scriptures," and faithful ministers of the truth, who have instructed many, not only of their own nation, but among the Gentiles.

We now reach the climax of this wonderful gradation. All the previous steps have linked Israel with everything that is sacred and holy in the history of the world and of humanity; but this last step

connects Israel, not with earth only, but with heaven—"And of whom as concerning the flesh is Christ, who is over all God blessed for ever." Oh, my friends, every time you approach the Throne of Grace, every time you seek to draw near to God, remember that the "Man at His right hand"—our one Mediator with God and Advocate with the Father—is, as far as His blessed humanity is concerned, forever linked with that nation; for when, "for us men and our salvation," the Eternal Word was made flesh, so that He might have a sacrifice to offer "for the life of the world" (John vi. 51), He took not upon Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham (Heb. ii. 16), and was born of a Jewish virgin named Mary, who was of the family of David, and of the tribe of Judah.

I do not expect love or interest for the Jewish people from those who know not and love not Christ. I am not surprised at the anti-Semitism which is to be found among so-called Christian nations who have become apostate from the truth, and who have turned the grace of God into lasciviousness; but I do wonder that there should be *true Christians* without any love or sympathy for Israel.

"Of whom, as concerning the flesh, is Christ," but the Babe which was born in Bethlehem is none other than He "whose goings forth are from of old, even from the days of eternity" (Mic. v. 2), and the "Son of Man" and "Son of David" is none other than the eternal Son of God—the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Jehovah-Tsidkenu, who, according to His Divine nature, is "*God over all, blessed forever.*" To Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory everlasting. Amen.