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Communications.

**THOUGHTS ON THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE CONDITION
OF THE JEWS.**

The providence of God unfolds its ample pages for our instruction. Written with the pen of infinite wisdom, it is replete with the richest discoveries of divine truth, and will amply repay the time and pains that may be bestowed on the study of its contents. But while the meanest understanding may find many passages in it level to its comprehension, the loftiest intellect will meet with some so inexplicably mysterious, as to defy the deepest investigation. "Thy way," exclaims the pious king of Israel, addressing his God, "thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

In the history of the Jewish people we find one dispensation of Divine Providence awfully mysterious. In looking at it we shall see light mingled with darkness, mercy and judgment wonderfully combined. If we contemplate it with a temper like that of Paul's, it will be a subject of profitable meditation; and, with feelings of deep humility and adoring reverence, we shall exclaim, as he did, while meditating on this very subject, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

How highly were the people of Israel formerly distinguished! By what a train of miracles were they delivered from bondage, and sustained in the wilderness! Egypt is desolated by judgments; the Red sea opens a way for them; manna descends from heaven to feed them; and water, gushing from the flinty rock, follows them in all their wanderings in the wilder-

threatenings of scripture, no less than the promises, will certainly be executed in due time: for, although God is slow to anger and of great kindness, and has no pleasure in the misery of his creatures; and although he has set his bow in the heavens, and promised, by covenant, not to destroy the world again by water; yet has he pledged his veracity, that those who discredit his word, outrage his authority, and despise his grace, shall not go unpunished. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." Psalm xi. 6. Reader, there is an *ark of safety*: believe God, come to Christ, and you shall be free from fear of evil.

W. N.

BRIEF DISCOURSES.

NO. VI.

A Lecture on the Twenty-fourth Psalm.

BY E. S. ELY.

This psalm is supposed by many commentators to have been composed, and originally sung, at the time in which David brought up to Jerusalem the ark of the covenant from the house of Obbedom. It is indeed admirably suited to that occasion; for the whole multitude may have cried, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein: for he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." The singers in Israel were divided into companies, who sang both alternately and collectively; and as the procession began to ascend the hill of Zion, some may have chaunted the interrogation, with a spiritual allusion, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?" while another section of the choir may have responded, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah."

When the procession drew nigh the gates of the city, the multitude may have shouted, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in." A portion of the singers posted at the gates may have sung, "Who is this king of glory?" and may have been answered by those who demanded entrance for the ark of the divine presence, "The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, mighty in battle." The same scene may have been renewed when they came to the gates of the tabernacle, in which the ark was to be deposited.

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the king of glory shall come in.”

“Who is this king of glory?”

“The Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory. Selah.”

The word SELAH, which occurs only in the Psalms, and in the most poetical part of Habakkuk, was probably used to guide the instrumental and vocal performers in the art of praise. Whether it enjoined an elevation of voice, or resting, or repetition, seems not to be settled by the learned. To all it must have been obvious, that the omission of it in reading in no case affects the sense. It is most probable that the portion of the psalm which intervenes between the first and second *Selah*, was reiterated as a chorus to the solemn song.

If, however, this psalm was, or was not, sung at the removal of the ark to its tabernacle on Mount Zion, it undoubtedly had respect to some scene more sublime and glorious. Let us endeavour to analyze it, that we may derive from it instruction and comfort.

In the *first* place, it asserts the earth and the fulness thereof, the world and them that dwell therein, to be Jehovah's property.

Mankind are prone to think the objects of sense, which they are permitted to use, their own possessions; but our God claims the trees of the forest, the wild fowl of the rivers, the fishes of the sea, and the cattle on all the hills. Yes, he claims man. Our parents, our partners, our children, our domestics are his property. We are not our own. The silver and gold which the miser hoards, or the prodigal scatters, belong to Jehovah. He claims our minds with all their faculties, and our bodies with all their functions. Let us endeavour to fix this truth in our memory, and apply it for the subjugation of all discontentment, when God recalls what he has loaned for a season. Should our nearest and dearest friends be called away from our side; or should we feel a disposition to use any creature of God in a way which he has forbidden, let us check every murmur and rebellious effort, by seasonably reflecting, that we have nothing but sin which we can call our own.

Secondly, the psalm shows, that the property which God has in his creatures, and his title to them, are derived from creation and providence. The earth and all its inhabitants belong to the Lord, for this reason, “he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.” The relation which subsists between a Creator and creature, gives the Creator a right to use the work of his hands according to his own pleasure, and is an essential part of the foundation of moral obligation. Could any being show, that Jehovah had not made him, he would at the same time prove, that he is under no obligation to obey his

will. But the Lord has formed the heavens and the earth; he has arranged and he upholds the oceans and the dry land; he has given man a suitable body and a reasonable soul, and therefore has he a property in them. Do you ask, O ye children of men, with what propriety Jehovah uses you for his own glory, and requires of you submission to his revealed will? The answer is given by Jehovah himself, "I have formed thee." The Spirit of the Lord has given men understanding, feeling, choice, and activity. "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." If then Jehovah has made the world of mankind, may he not do what he will with his own? Every intelligent being who has a conscience, approves of the doctrine, when it is presented to him, that a creature ought to obey the will of his Maker. If he made us for his pleasure, it is both our duty and interest to consult his pleasure in all things.

The question here arises very naturally, "Who of God's rational creatures then, does so please him, as that he may expect to stand in the presence of the Lord, and have an everlasting home in heaven?" Who shall ascend, with divine permission, into the hill of the Lord, on which Jehovah manifests himself in love and glory? Who shall stand in his holy place?

Thirdly, the psalm, in answer to this inquiry, describes the character of all those persons, who seek the favour of the Redeemer, and shall enter heaven. Jesus is called Jacob in Isaiah, and in this psalm, because he is the *heel* that bruises the head of the old serpent, and because he like Jacob, in pleading for his people, has power with God, and prevails. "The man that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully," shall stand in the holy place in which the gracious presence of God peculiarly resides. Such as this man is every one who belongs to the generation of them that seek HIM; that seek thy face, O Jacob. All the friends and followers of the Saviour, who may expect to be glorious and happy with him for ever, must evince themselves to be, comparatively speaking, men of clean hands, or of pure external conduct; of a pure heart, or of holy thoughts and feelings; men weaned from idolatry so as not to have lifted up their soul unto vanity; and men of veracity and fidelity, who swear not deceitfully. No living man is absolutely of clean hands and a pure heart, for all have sinned; yet all the people of the Lord, when compared with what they once were, and with what all unrenewed men now are, may be said to be perfect and pure. Hence it is said, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace;" and "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." Let none, then, imagine themselves candidates for heaven, and in

the way to the holy hill of God, whose external conduct is not free from the impurity, baseness, meanness, and selfishness of the world which lieth in sin. The habitual transgressor of human and divine laws, when he pretends to pray, lifts up to God his hands filled with bribes, with the fruits of oppression, and stained with blood.

Lest, however, the man of mere morality, who is externally honest, from no praiseworthy motives, should think himself a child of the skies, it is added, he must have a pure heart. He must be washed from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit; must be changed in his thoughts and feelings; must be a meek, humble, thankful, prayerful, and benevolent man; he must desire to glorify and enjoy God; he must love and resolve to perform his duty, or he has none of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

That men may not profess to have clean hands and pure hearts, while they are destitute of piety, the psalm teaches also that all who would enter heaven must abstain from idolatry; must not worship vanity; and consequently must conform to the ordinances of Jehovah. Those who would worship God, must do it in spirit and in truth, according to the revealed will of Heaven. His heart is not right with God, who knows that Jehovah has instituted any mode of expressing reverence and love for himself, to which the will and affections are not disposed to yield a strict and cheerful conformity.

Some, nevertheless, profess to be pure in moral conduct, in heart, and worship, who are ready to say, "Our tongues are our own; and it cannot be criminal to talk for amusement." But remember, all ye who think that you have a perfect right to use the gift of speech without restraint, that if any person bridle not his tongue, and make use of such conversation as tends to edification; if any man utter oaths or vows lightly, without an intention to fulfil them; if any man promises but to deceive, he is not washed from his sins, nor has he any portion in Jacob. Yet, if any one prove himself to be pure in conduct, holy in heart, scriptural in worship, and faithful in speech, he is still incapable of satisfying the demands of the law; and how shall he stand before God?

Fourthly, the psalm teaches us, that Jehovah will bless every renewed man, by conferring on him a justifying righteousness. "He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, even righteousness from the God of his salvation." Every person whose character answers to that of him who seeks the face of Jacob, is a justified person; for so soon as the Holy Spirit renews the sinner, the Judge of all the earth gives him a covenant title to the active and passive obedience of the Son of God for his justification and pardon. Jesus, then, is the God of our salvation. The

benefits which he confers on his people are inestimable! By faith we receive of him a righteousness which the law cannot reject; so that he becomes the Lord our righteousness.

Fired with the thought, the Psalmist exclaims, this Saviour is worthy of being received into the church on earth, into every human heart, and into the highest heavens.

The *fourth* and last part of the psalm, therefore, is a demand for the reception of this God of our salvation. The dialogical form is adopted to give life and spirit to the demand, while it exhibits the dignity of the person who is to be ushered through the unfolding gates. A repetition is used on account of the importance of the subject, that the mind may dwell upon it: and possibly to denote that the Son of man should be received both into Jerusalem on earth, and into the place of his rest and mediatorial triumphs above. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in." The natural doors which were to open for the ark of the covenant were probably suspended horizontally, instead of perpendicularly, so that it was most natural to speak of their being lifted up. A demand is here made for the church to prepare the way of the Lord, and receive her Saviour, who at the time of writing this psalm, was to come. The gates of cities were the seats of kings and judges, and hence were used to denote the men of authority: so that the rulers in the church, the elders and princes of Israel, were called upon to receive the King of glory. To such as might demand, "Who is this king of glory?" the Spirit of the Lord has said, though he should appear in the form of a servant, meek, and sitting on an ass, yet he is "Jehovah, strong and mighty; Jehovah, mighty in battle." The Saviour whom the church is called upon to receive, is declared to be God as well as man; to be strong to rule and defend; to be mighty to save, and mighty to overcome rebel legions of men and angels in battle. Receive him, who shall conquer sin, death, and hell, O ye sons of men, for your Saviour.

It is no less the duty of the visible church to receive Jesus now as Jehovah, who comes in spirit, the Conqueror and Redeemer, than it was her duty to receive him when he came in the flesh.

Behold, he stands at the door of the human heart, and knocks for admittance. He calls to the sons of men. Open your hearts to receive the brightness of the Father's glory. Do you ask after his character who demands admission to your thoughts, your affections, and all the secret springs of your action? It is the Lord Jesus, who has a strong arm, to save, or to destroy.

The second demand is probably addressed to the thrones, dominions, and powers, which are the gates of heaven, that Je-

sus in his human nature, returning from his labours, his sufferings, and the silence of the tomb, should be admitted into the immediate presence of the Father. Having finished the work which was given him to perform, having made an end of sin, having brought in a perfect righteousness, and having triumphed over death, he ascended to a company of angels who were waiting for him in the lower skies. These heavenly hosts surrounded him as he went up, and when they approached the holy of holies in the third heavens, demanded in his name, as a conqueror, reception, saying, "Lift up your heads," &c. A glad choir within demanded, to make their returning companions proclaim the God of salvation again, and again, "Who is this king of glory?" The cloud of convoying angels say, "The Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory." In this light, the close of the psalm appears to have been a prediction of the exaltation of Messiah. The heavens have lifted up their everlasting doors, and received our brother, in the character of our representative and precursor. Let us fix our thoughts and affections on him where he is; let us live and die in his service; and then with songs of praise and victory we shall be escorted to his presence, to be like him, and to be ever with the Lord. Amen.

JESUS, THE CHIEF AMONG TEN THOUSAND.

Splendid and imposing crimes have often been applauded by the indiscriminating multitude; and whilst a religious sense of moral obligation, so necessary to true dignity of character, is frequently thrust into obscurity, and esteemed of little worth; censure is engaged in trumpeting the celebrity of political intriguers; in decking the brow of literary pedants, or in fabricating an apotheosis for valorous knights, whose fame is the blood and the tears of the slaughtered and bereaved.

In the estimation of the world, character is dignified by a proficiency in science unconsecrated to the service of God; political art and manœuvring in the cabinet; or intrepidity in the field of rout and carnage.

Man is not a fit subject for high-wrought encomium; his heart the Pandora-casket of every pestilent passion, ready to burst forth into open and brutal violence.

But there is one, whose name was known to Abraham, and whose fame has reached us; whose memorial shines in the grandest movements of nature and soothes in the most beneficent dispensations of Providence; to whose underived dignity the heavens could give no accession, and from whose glory the manger could subtract no lustre; who in his external appearance was man in the humblest sphere of life, yet in his irre-