

STEM Publishing: The writings of C. H. Mackintosh:

The History of the Tribe of Levi.

C. H. Mackintosh.

THE TRIBE OF LEVI ARRANGED ACCORDING TO THEIR FAMILIES

Name Meaning

First Class

Gershon A stranger, or exile

Lael Dedicated, or belonging to God

Eliasaph God hath added

Shimei Hearing, Renowned

Libni For edification, White

Second Class

Kohath Congregation, Assembly

Hebron Association, communion

Amram Exalted people, of the exalted One

Izhar Oil

Uzziel The strength of God

Third Class

Merari Bitterness or sorrow

Mahli Sick, Pardon or a harp, sickly

Mushi Yielding, one who has found a refuge, forsaking

Abihail Father of strength

Zuriel My rock is God

There are few exercises more profitable for the Christian than that of reflecting upon the character of God as unfolded in the history of the saints and fathers of ancient times recorded in the Scriptures of the Old Testament: and indeed this might be expected from the very nature of the subject, which is such that, whatever be its extent, it unfolds principles to us which stand intimately connected with all that is important for us to know or be established in. Thus, whether we get the dealings of God on a limited scale, as with any one of the fathers personally, or more widely extended, as with the seed of Israel afterwards, it is nevertheless the same lesson we are called upon to learn, namely, God and man. Now, this is what should enhance exceedingly the value of the Old Testament to the Christian; almost the great body of its teaching is of the above character: and not only so, but it also (as looked at in this point of view) guards effectually against the mere exercise of imagination; for when we consider the history of any man or people, it is not necessary that we should decide positively what is shadowed out therein;* It is enough for us to see that we have before us a more or less extensive development of

the character and actings of God and man; and this, without ever descending beneath the surface of Scripture, cannot fail of being instructive and edifying to the soul.

{*In many of the Old Testament narratives, however, the instruction is so manifestly typical that even the most cautious reader, if at all familiar with Scripture, cannot refuse to look at it in that point of view.}

But, of all the histories of the Old Testament embodying instruction of the above character, I believe there are few more copious, deep and varied than that which is about to engage our attention. If the narrative of a soul taken up by sovereign and eternal grace from the pit of corruption and deep depravity, carried through the various stages which grace and truth had enacted for sinful man, until at last he is set down in the very sanctuary of God and established in the enjoyment of the covenant of life and peace forever; if, I say, such a narrative would possess charms and present attractions to us, then does the history of Levi abound in this. It is only a matter of astonishment that a history fraught with such rich and varied instruction has not occupied more of the thoughts of those luminaries of the Church whose writings have been a source of comfort and instruction to all who have been taught to value the truth of God.

Yet, much as I see in the history of Levi, and much as I admire what I do see, I could not think of directing the reader's thoughts to the subject without informing him that I purpose doing little more than to bring before his mind in a connected way the various Scriptures which treat of this most interesting question; however, these Scriptures are so plain and striking that no one who is at all familiar with Scripture truths can fail to enter into them. Now, as I purpose, with the Lord's blessing and grace, to follow the history of Levi through all the Scriptures in which it is brought before us, I will commence with his birth, as recorded in Genesis 29: 34; "And she [Leah] conceived again, and bare a son: and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have borne him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi" (that is, "joined").

Here, then, we are presented with the birth and name of this most remarkable character — a name of wondrous significance as looked at in connection with his after history, whether in nature's wild and lawless extravagance, in which we find him "joined" with his brother in the perpetration of a deed of blood and murder (Gen. 34), or in the day when he was called to drink deeply and largely of the cup of God's electing grace, when "joined" with Aaron in "the work of the tabernacle" (Num. 8).

Genesis 34: 25-26: "And it came to pass on *the third day*, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house and went out."

As the Spirit of God in Jacob has furnished us with a striking commentary on the above piece of cruelty, we will consider the Scripture in which the commentary is given, namely, Genesis 49: 5-7: "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel; I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel."

We have here a truly humbling view of human nature as looked at in the light of the holiness of God. It is as if the Lord would say to us, Look here! behold a man clothed in nature's blackest garb, and presenting nature's most forbidding aspect. Examine him closely, in order that you, seeing what man is when stripped of all that false clothing which ignorance or vain self-righteousness would put upon him, may know the rich aboundings of My grace, which can avail to lift even such a one into the loftiest

heights of communion — heights which human conception would utterly fail to mount, but which My grace, through the blood of the cross, can make available to the very chief of sinners.

In reading such a description as that which the above passage presents to us, how needful it is for the sinner to bear in mind that it is not only in the light of *God's holiness* that he is called to look at himself, but also in the light of *His grace*. When this is learned he needs not be afraid to penetrate deeply into the dark recesses of his heart's corruption; for if God in grace *fill* the scene, the sinner (so far as his own righteousness is concerned) must necessarily be *out* of the scene; and then it is no longer a question of what we think about sin, but how *God* will deal with it in grace, and that is simply to put it away forever — yea, to bury it forever in the waters of His forgetfulness: thus it will be placing our sin side by side with God's grace; which is what the gospel invites us to do, and which, moreover, is the only way to arrive at a proper settlement of the question of sin. On the other hand, where this saving principle is not known — not believed — the sinner will undoubtedly seek to make the load of his guilt as light as possible, in order that he may have as little to do as he may. This will ever lead to the most unutterable and intolerable bondage; or if not to this, to that which is much worse, even to detestable religious pride, which is of all things most truly abominable in the sight of God.

Reader, if you have not as yet got the question of sin settled between your conscience and God, ponder, I do beseech you, what I have now stated; for to know this principle in spirit is life eternal. Christ has, *once for all*, borne sin's deepest curse in His own body on the tree, and now even *Levi* can lift up his head for although he be by nature only conversant with "*instruments of cruelty*," things which must have kept God forever at a distance from "his secret and his assembly;" although he be by nature cruel, *fierce, self-willed, scattered, and divided*, yet God can, in the exercise of His mercy, make him conversant with "the instruments of the tabernacle," bring him into the enjoyment of the covenant of *life and peace*, in union with the great head of the priestly family, and, in the power of this blessed union, cause him to have his "*lights and perfections with his Holy One*" (Deut. 33: 8; Mal 2: 4-5). However, we must not anticipate the teaching of passages which are yet to come under our notice; I will therefore close my remarks on this part of our subject by requesting my reader to compare attentively the character of Levi, as above recorded, with that which the Apostle Paul, quoting from the Psalms, has given of man generally whether Jew or Gentile: "There is *none* righteous, no, not one; there is *none* that understandeth, there is *none* that seeketh after God. They are *all* gone out of the way, they are *together* become unprofitable; there is *none* that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD: *destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known*: there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3: 10-18).

Exodus 32: 25-29 — "And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that He may bestow upon you a blessing this day."

Here a new scene opens to us, and we are called to witness the dawning of a new day upon Levi; a day, moreover, which may justly lead us to anticipate great things. It is true we get him here likewise

with his sword by his side, but, oh, for what a different purpose, and in what a different cause! It is not now in anger and self-will slaying a man, but in holy jealousy and care for the honour of the Lord God of Israel, and in simple obedience to His command; and although this; may, and will, lead to the very cutting off of a brother, a son, or a friend, Levi cares not; for the word is, "Consecrate yourselves to the Lord, that He may bestow upon you a blessing." This was enough for Levi; and although by nature he was vile and utterly unfit either for the fellowship or service of God, yet is he nor the foremost in jealous vindication of His holy name and worship against those who would seek to "turn their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass." Nor is Levi now seen "joined" with his brother Simeon — no he might join in league with him in the days of his wickedness for the perpetration of deeds of blood; but here, as I before observed, we get the opening of a new scene and therefore he is seen "joined" with the Lord and His servant Moses for the execution of righteous judgement upon idolatry.

And henceforth, in following the footsteps of Levi, we shall find that, instead of being "swift to shed blood," they are to be "swift in following the movements of the cloud, and, "swift" in performing the service of the tabernacle.

It would, of course, be quite foreign to our subject to dwell upon the sad and humbling scene that called out the above act of service on the part of Levi Suffice it to say that it was, as we know, on the part of Aaron and the camp, a ceasing to exercise faith in the fact that Moses was *alive* in the presence of God for them. The consequence of which was an entire forgetfulness of the mighty Hand and stretched out Arm that had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, and of their present position *in the wilderness*; hence, as might be expected, "the people *sat down to eat and drink* and rose up to play." May the Lord preserve us from like forgetfulness; and, seeing "those things were written for our admonition," may we be truly admonished thereby not to "lust after evil things."

We shall now pass on to the next Scripture, where we get the Lord's own thoughts upon the above act of service, namely, Deuteronomy 33: 8-11: "And of Levi he [Moses] said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy Holy One, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed Thy word and kept Thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob Thy judgements, and Israel Thy law; they shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon Thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept I the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again."

In this passage we have real Levite service brought before us in the words, "who said unto his father and mother, I have not seen him," etc. The true and decided servant of God will ever have to experience something of this; indeed, the measure thereof will just be in proportion to the faithfulness and power of his walk: "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"; therefore every heir of that kingdom must show himself in "readiness to deny all the claims which "flesh and blood" would make on him, whether in himself or in others. Most happily does the address to "the queen," in Ps. 45, connect itself with this point: "*Harken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget e also thine own people* and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty for He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him" (vers. 10-11).

We have all to watch against a tendency to be influenced by the claims of flesh and blood, in our testimony for Christ. He Himself has said on this subject that "no man having put his hand to the plow and *looking back*, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9: 62). And, as some one has observed, it was upon this point that the prophet Elisha's character seemed a little defective, for when Elijah cast his

mantle over him, or, in other words, when he had put upon him the high honour of making him a prophet of the Lord God, Elisha's heart seemed to yearn after home, and he said, "Let me, I pray thee, *kiss my father and my mother*, and then I will *follow thee*" (1 Kings 19: 20). Now this was most natural, and, as some would say, amiable and affectionate; but, oh, amiability and natural affection have often hindered people from entering as they should into the Lord's service; and although it is one of the marks of the latter-day apostasy to be "without natural affection," yet does Moses, in the above-cited passage, ask the Lord to bless Levi, because "he said unto his father and his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children." How grossly inconsistent would it have been for Levi to have said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother," when called to enter upon the Lord's work; and not less so is it for us to allow the claims of "flesh and blood" to interfere with our true-hearted Levite service to our God, who has done so much for *us*.

But let us carefully observe the blessed consequences of this decision of character on the part of Levi. These are, first, "They shall teach Jacob Thy judgements, and Israel Thy law." Secondly, "They shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon Thine altar." Thirdly, "Bless his substance." Fourthly, "Accept the work of his hands." Fifthly, "Smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." All these fruits are distinct, and yet intimately connected, as springing from the same source, namely, simple, devoted and uncompromising obedience to the Lord. As to the first of these fruits, how true it is that it is only the man who himself endeavours to walk in power before God that can speak with effect to the hearts and consciences of others; nothing else will do — nothing else will tell, either upon the hearts or in the lives of Christians. There may be, and, alas, is much of mere systematic teaching and preaching of things which the mere intellect may have received, and which, by a natural fluency of language, we may be able to give out; but all such teaching is vain, and had much better be avoided in the sight of God. True, it might often give to our public assemblies an appearance of barrenness and poverty which our poor, proud hearts could ill brook; but would it not be far better to keep silence than to substitute mere carnal effort for the blessed energy of the Holy Spirit?

True ministry, however, the ministry of the Spirit, will always commend itself to the heart and conscience. We can always know the source from which a man is drawing who speaks in "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth," and with the ability which God giveth; and while we should ever pray to be delivered from the mere effort of man's intellect to handle the truth of God amongst us, we should diligently cultivate that power to teach which stands connected, as in Levi's case, with the denial of the claims of flesh and blood, and with entire devotedness to the Lord's service.

In the second consequence above referred to we have a very elevated point: "They shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon Thine altar." This is worship. We put incense before God when we are enabled, in the power of communion, to present in His presence the sweet odour of Christ in His person and work. This is our proper occupation as members of the chosen and separated tribe.

But it is particularly instructive to look at both the above mentioned consequences in connection; i.e., the Levites in ministry to their brethren, and the Levites in worship before God: it was as acceptable in the sight of God, and as divine an exercise of his functions, for a Levite to instruct his brethren as it was for him to burn incense before God. This is very important. We should never separate these two things. If we do not see that it is the same Spirit who must qualify us to speak for God as to speak to Him, there is a manifest want of moral order in our souls. If we could keep this principle clearly before our minds, it would be a most effectual means of maintaining amongst us the true dignity and solemnity of ministry in the Word: having lost sight of it has been productive of very sad

consequences. If we imagine for a moment that we can teach Jacob by any other power or ability than that by which we put incense before God, or if we imagine that one is not as acceptable before God as the other, we are not soundly instructed upon one of the most important points of truth; for, as some one has observed, "Let us look at this point illustrated in the personal ministry of Christ, and we shall no longer say that teaching by the Holy Ghost is inferior to praise by the same, for surely the apostleship of Christ when He came *from God* was as sweet in its savour to God as His priesthood when *He went to God* to minister to Him in that office. The candlestick in the holy place which diffused the light of life — God's blessed name — was as valuable, at least in His view, as the altar in the same place, which presented the perfume of praise, whether of Christ personally, or of His body the church, for in both do we not equally see Christ."

We now come to speak of the third point, namely, "Bless, Lord, his substance." This is just what we might have expected; an increase of blessing will ever be the result of real true-hearted devotedness to Christ. "Every branch in Me that beareth fruit He purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruit;" "The diligent soul shall be made fat;" and "To him that hath shall more be given." Levi had exhibited much diligence of soul in the Lord's service — he had shown himself in readiness to vindicate His name in strong and decided opposition to every mere human thought and affection; and now the Lord will show Levi that He is not unrighteous to forget his work and labour of love, "for He will bless his substance." We find the Apostle Paul bringing forward the same principle to his son Timothy when he tells him to "meditate on these things; *give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all* Here he connects the "profiting" with the "giving himself wholly": this will ever be the case; and if we would experience more than we do the meaning and power of the words, "Bless, Lord, his substance," we must first endeavour to enter into the meaning of what goes before, namely, "who said to his father and to his mother, I have not known him," etc. "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 19: 29).

Not less striking is the connection between what has just been stated and our fourth point, namely, "Accept the work of his hands." This I conceive to be a point of the greatest importance to us, and one which involves a question upon which we frequently display much want of intelligence. We often find it difficult to reconcile the idea of salvation through free grace with that of an increase of blessing and power for walking in obedience; and yet we find the two things constantly maintained in Scripture; thus we read, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and *will manifest Myself to him.*" And, again, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him" (John 14: 21, 23).

This is very clear and decided upon the subject: we see here that the manifestation of the Son is made to depend on our keeping the commandments of Christ. Grace takes up a sinner and leads him into the knowledge of the full forgiveness of his sins through faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ: but all this is simply a means to an end: it is, in a word, to set him down in a position of responsibility to Christ, which position he by nature could never have sustained, because "the carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." If, then, a man be put into a place of responsibility It is clear that the more faithfully and diligently he maintains that place, the more enlarged will be his communion.

A father may have two children, the one obedient, the other the very reverse; now, they are both his children; neither the obedience of the one nor the disobedience of the other can interfere in the least with the relationship existing between them; but can we have a question as to which of them would

enjoy most of the father's presence and affection? Surely not; a father likes to be obeyed, and will love the obedient child. There may be extraordinary cases where, from a warped judgement or a blind and unmeaning partiality, the disobedient, lawless son may have more of the heart of the parent than the other; but this is not so with God: His judgement is clear and unerring: He can accurately distinguish between the one that honours Him and the one that despises Him: the former "He will honour," the latter He will "lightly esteem." The Lord does not ask a sinner *dead* in trespasses and sins to serve Him, for all such a one could do would be polluted with sin — his very prayers are polluted — his meditations are polluted — his acts of benevolence are polluted; in a word, he is all polluted, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, and therefore can do nothing acceptable in the sight of God. But the Lord quickens those that are dead in trespasses and sins, and then teaches them to "walk worthy of Him as dear children," and to be fruitful in every good word and work, to the praise of His name: and when we do this He graciously condescends to "accept the work of our hands." But not only does Scripture abound with precepts which confirm what has been above stated, it also affords numerous examples and illustrations of the same; thus, for instance, the case of Abraham and Lot, in the opening of the book of Genesis. These were both servants of God, but yet how differently they walked! one loved God; the other loved the well-watered plains of Sodom: and the consequence was, that while the Lord Himself could meet with Abraham, and sup with him, and, moreover, unfold to him His counsels with reference to Sodom, He merely sends angels to Sodom, and we can plainly perceive in their manner toward Lot their marked disapproval of his circumstances, for when he invites them into his house, they reply, "*Nay, but we will abide in the street all night.*"

This is plain: the angels of the Lord would rather abide all night in the streets of guilty Sodom than go in to a child of His who was not walking in obedience; nor does the fact that they afterwards consented to go in at all interfere with the point which I am seeking to establish; no, their answer speaks volumes of the most solemn and practical instruction to us; they enter into *Lot's house*, it is true; but if they do, it is only to counteract the sad effects of *Lot's sin*. May we, then, seek, by prayer and communion with God, to keep ourselves in the path of obedience, so that we may prove in our soul's happy experience the meaning of the prayer in our text, "Accept the work of his hands."

We have now arrived at the fifth and last point in this branch of our subject, namely, "Smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." This is properly the last point, when there shall be neither "adversary nor evil occurrent" — "we shall rest from our labour and conflict, and enter into possession of that upon which hope now feeds; therefore, when it can be said of our enemies "that they rise not again," we shall be happy indeed.

However, there is much of practical value in this point in the connection in which it stands here, i.e., as a *consequence* of obedience; there is nothing that gives the soul such marvellous power over enemies as an obedient, holy walk. Christ has conquered the devil, the death and hell, and He has moreover crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts, and therefore when a soul believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he is introduced at once into a place where he has Satan, the world, and the flesh under his feet; and it is as he walks in the power of resurrection life, that he can at all maintain this, his blessed ground. But alas! how often does it happen that instead of having all these *our* enemies under our feet, we are found under their feet, to the gross dishonour of our Lord, and the sorrow and debility of our own souls, and why, but because we walk not in simple obedience.

Every step we take in real obedience to Christ is, so far, a victory gained over the flesh, and the devil; and every fresh victory ministers fresh power for the conflict which follows; thus we grow. And on the other hand, every battle *lost* only serves to weaken us, while it gives power to our enemies to attack us again. Thus we see that the man whose heart is truly devoted to the Lord will have power to

teach — power to worship; he will increase in substance, for Christ causes those that love Him "to inherit *substance*" (Prov. 8). He will enjoy more of God's favour and of the light of His countenance, for "them that honour Me I will honour"; and, finally, he will have enlarged power over all enemies. All these are the fruits of that true Levite devotedness which will enable a man to say "to his father, and to his mother, I have not seen him"; or, in other words, those fruits can only be enjoyed by one who is ready to "leave all and follow Christ." This being the case, then, we can have little difficulty in accounting for the poverty in gifts of ministry — the poverty in worship — the meagreness of growth — the many interruptions in the enjoyment of divine favour — the almost total lack of power over enemies of which we have all to complain. Many seek to satisfy themselves by saying that we cannot expect the same power in gifts and worship now as that which fell to the lot of the saints in the apostolic day, and this, of course, we are not going to deny; but then, the question is, Have we as much power and freshness in these things as we might have? I believe we have not — and why? Is not Levi's God our God? Yes, He is, blessed be His name, and the same everlasting and abundant fountain of blessing as ever He was, but we, alas, are *far behind* in the matter of Levi's true devotedness; and this is the root of it all, for it remains unalterably true that "to him that hath shall more be given," and "we cannot serve two masters." This is true — solemn — and practical.

We are now called to consider a Scripture which will unfold to us at once the wondrous secret of how a sinner so degraded as Levi could hold a place of such elevation and nearness to God as that which he afterwards Occupied. There is nothing in a sinner by nature with which God could hold any intercourse; therefore, if ever He brings any one into a place of blessing and high communion, He does so in *pure grace*, and thus *excludes* "boasting" altogether, for "no flesh shall glory in His presence." Those who look upon it as presumption in a sinner to speak of holding a place of such nearness to God, seem to lose sight of this completely. It could never be *pride* that would lead any one into a place where he would be broken to pieces, and be shown that he was altogether corrupt and worthless; if God were to elevate *flesh*, and bring flesh into a place of nearness to Himself, then indeed there would be some force in the objection on the ground of presumption; but God does no such thing: the flesh is so far gone in ruin that it cannot be improved, and therefore God declares in the Cross His mind about the flesh, namely, that it is a condemned thing; but He, by the same Cross, gives the poor sinner *life*, and in the power of *that life*, and not in the power of life in the flesh, He brings the sinner into His presence and sets him down at His table; so that it is not the presumption of a poor prodigal that assigns the place which he is to occupy, but the *grace* and boundless loving kindness of the father: thus, God says to Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before Me," and what then? "Make thee an ark of gopher wood" — and in that ark is Noah raised up beyond the region of judgement, and a judged world, into a place of undisturbed communion. Now, we shall find the very same principles developed in God's dealings with Levi, in the Scripture which is about to engage our attention. I shall first consider their cleansing; and secondly, their position and service. First, their cleansing as recorded in

Numbers 8: 5-14:

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, even fine flour mingled with oil; and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering. And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together: and thou shalt bring the Levites before the Lord: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord for an offering of the children

of Israel, that they may execute the service of the Lord. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the Lord, to make an atonement for the Levites. And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the Lord. Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be Mine."

This passage furnishes us with a very rich and blessed branch of our interesting subject. We were enabled to see, in looking at Levi by nature, that such was his character that God would have no fellowship with him whatever, and that, so far as Levi was concerned, he should abide forever in *his own habitation*, in company with the "instruments of cruelty" which were therein. But God will not leave him there, and therefore God must Himself provide the remedy — God Himself must cleanse this self-willed, cruel and fierce man. And here we are invited to recall a thought which occurred to the mind in the opening of this paper, viz., that man's sin must ever be brought into the presence of God's grace. Levi had nothing else to look to; his sin was such as to preclude every thought of human remedy; the law condemned Levi's nature; and God had pronounced him unfit for His presence. And what, then, had Levi to do? Could he set himself with heart and soul to keep the law? Impossible: the law had not only condemned his works, but pronounced the curse of God upon his very nature. The law said, "Thou shalt do no murder" and having said this, it added, "*Cursed* is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." But Levi had murder in his nature, therefore Levi's nature was cursed.

What, then, could Levi do? Might he not cast himself over upon the mercy of God with the hope that He would deal lightly with his sins? No; by no means: God had given forth His solemn and unalterable decree, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret"; God could not come into a habitation wherein were "instruments of cruelty."

Thus, then, Levi was completely shut up without a single means of escape; the law nailed him down to this one point, "Answer my demands." And all that Levi had towards the discharge of these demands was, "anger, fierceness, murder, self-will, cruelty," etc.: poor resources, alas! Nor would the law of God enter into any composition with the sinner; it should have "the uttermost farthing," or else the word was, "*cursed art thou*." Therefore Levi, *as a man alive in the flesh*, or, in other words, Levi, as seeking to get life through the law, was judged, condemned, and set aside, and it only remained for him to take thus the place of *one dead*, in order that God might *in grace* quicken him into new life, which God was ready and willing to do, and which, as we shall see, He graciously did, according to His own marvellous thoughts, and in His own way.

{The reader will, of course, bear in mind that what is stated the believer now knows in reality through the Holy Ghost.}

Levi, then, had just to see himself as one that was, in God's account, *dead*, as we read "for they [i.e., the Levites] are wholly given unto Me from among the children of Israel; *instead* of such as open every womb, even *instead* of the first-born of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto Me: for all the first-born of the children of Israel are Mine both man and beast: on the day that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt, *I sanctified them for Myself; and I have taken the Levites for all the first-born of the children of Israel*" (Num. 8: 16-18).

The Lord passed through the land of Egypt with the sword of justice unsheathed, to smite all the first-born, nor would Israel's first-born have escaped, had not the sword fallen upon the neck of the spotless victim and thus, as some one has beautifully observed, "There was death in every house, not only in the houses of the Egyptians, but also in those of the Israelites: in the former, it was the *death of*

Egypt's first-born; in the latter, the death of God's LAMB."

The Levites, then, were taken *instead* of those upon whom the sword of the destroying about Levi in this paper is to be regarded as typical of that which angel should have fallen; or, in other words, *the Levites were, typically a dead and risen people*, and thus were no longer looked at in the circumstances of nature, but of *new life* through grace, in which they were placed by God Himself. And here let me observe that this is the path which every sinner must travel if he would know experimentally anything of Levi's after history. There is no other way in which to escape from the judgement of the law on the one hand, or from the horrid workings of indwelling corruption on the other, than simply to see ourselves "dead" to both, and "alive unto God through Jesus Christ." "How shall we," says the apostle, "that are *dead to sin* live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6: 2-4). And, again, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become *dead to the law* by the body of Christ, that ye should be *married to another*, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7: 4). But not only are death and resurrection the only possible means by which a sinner can escape the condemnation of the law and the tyrannical sway of sin, they are also the only means by which he can acceptably serve God. The flesh, or carnal mind, cannot serve God, for it is not subject to His law, neither indeed can be; therefore we infer that the sources of that life by which we can serve God are not to be found in the flesh, but only in union with the Lord Jesus in resurrection. "If a man abide not *in Me*, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered" (John 15: 6). Consequently, when God would bring Levi into a place of nearness and service to Himself, He shows him to us as passing through those circumstances which, in the clearest manner, illustrate *death and resurrection*; for they are taken instead of those that were as dead, but who escaped. through the death of the lamb: and then having thus passed through the circumstances of death, they are told in chap. 8 to "*put off the old man and put on the new*" for that is the meaning of the "washing of water," and "shaving of the flesh," etc. This is in full keeping with what the apostle states to his son Titus: "For we ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, *living in malice and envy*, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the *washing of regeneration*, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3: 3-6).

But in order that we may have a clearer and more comprehensive view of the ground upon which the Levites stood before God, I would refer, in as brief and concise a manner as I can, to the offerings connected with their consecration: these were the burnt offering, the meat offering, and the sin offering; all, as we shall see, showing out the Lord Jesus Christ in His varied aspects.* And first, the burnt offering: the principles unfolded in this offering are brought out in the first chapter of Leviticus, where we read, "If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord" (ver. 3).

{*It may be well just to observe here that in considering the offerings above referred to I have merely looked at them with reference to the question of Levi's history}

Here, then, is something real for the soul to feed on and rejoice in. We have in the burnt offering the Lord Jesus Christ, in all His fullness and perfections, as offering Himself "*without spot to God*," and also as accepted before God *for us*. In this He was found to be "*a male without blemish*"; so much so, that the One in whose sight the very heavens are not clean, could say, "In whom I am well pleased":

and again, "Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth."

But further, this unblemished offering presents Himself voluntarily at the door of the tabernacle. "No man," says the Lord Jesus, speaking of His life, "taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again: this commandment have I received of My Father." And truly, in tracing the way of the blessed Jesus through this defiled world, we can recognise this feature of the burnt offering in a very striking manner. From first to last His course was marked with all the steadiness and divine uninterrupted calmness of true devotedness to God. The billows of dark and fierce temptation might roll and toss themselves with a range and fury which would have crushed one less than God. The devil might stir up all his deadly malice against Him; man might display all his enmity — enmity which could only be outdone by the eternal friendship of this devoted One. His disciples, moreover, may refuse to "watch with Him one hour." Death may arm himself with all his ghastly terrors, and pour out a cup mixed with hell's bitterest ingredients; and further, display his deadly sting in all its infernal keenness and power to wound. The grave may conjure up all its unutterable horrors to make one grand struggle for "*victory*," but *all* in vain. The answer of this unblemished voluntary offering to all these was, "My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." He had His eye upon one object, and that was "the joy that was set before Him." He looked forward to the moment when He would be able to draw forth from the inexhaustible treasuries of eternal love the rich and princely fruits of His hard-bought victory, and pour them forth in divine profusion upon the "travail of His soul"; even the Church, which He loved, and purchased with His own precious blood. He eagerly anticipated "the morning without clouds," when, surrounded by the myriads of His ransomed brethren, He will sound forth in everlasting strains the mighty answer to all the foul aspersions of the enemy as to the love of God toward the sinner. All these attractions, I say, He had before Him, and therefore He marched onward in the greatness of His strength; He *steadfastly* set His face to go to Jerusalem." Lord Jesus Christ, invigorate our poor cold hearts to sound forth the eternal honours of Thine adorable name; and may our lives be more and more the decided evidence of our hearts — love to Thee, for "Thou alone art worthy!" All this is surely most blessed for us; but, blessed as it is, it is not all; there are other strokes from the pencil of the Divine Artist, calculated, in the highest degree, to captivate our spiritual tastes, yea, more, to feed our souls. "He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and *it shall be accepted for him*, to make atonement for him" (ver. 4). Here, then, is grace! Levi, the self-willed, cruel, fierce, and blood-shedding Levi, is accepted in all the perfectness and acceptableness of this "unblemished male" before God: whatever of excellency, whatever of value, whatever of purity, God beheld in this offering, that did He likewise behold in Levi as "accepted in the offering." Thus, look at Levi *apart from* the offering, and you will find him such that God could not come into *his* assembly: but look at him as *in the offering*, and you find him, through grace, as pure and as perfect as the offering itself. Nothing could surpass this most excellent grace. The grace that could take up a sinner from such a pit of corruption as that in which Levi lay grovelling, and lead him into such high elevation, deserves the highest note of praise; and, blessed be God, it shall, ere long, have it from all who, like Levi, have felt its sacred power.

However, we must not enter too minutely into the detail of this burnt offering, and there are just two points further to which I will refer. The first is presented to us in ver. 6: "And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces." Here we see at once to what a process of strict, jealous and uncompromising scrutiny the Lord Jesus exposed Himself in offering Himself before God. It was not enough that the animal should be APPARENTLY "without blemish," for the skin, or *outward surface*, might look very well, and at the same time the offering be not at all fit for God's altar; therefore the *outward surface* must be removed, in order that this offering may be examined in all its sinews, joints and veins, and thus be found, as to *the springs of action, the structure of his frame*, and the source and

channels of the life that animated him, a perfectly unblemished offering. But further, "*he shall cut it into his pieces,*" i.e., take the offering asunder, and examine its various parts, in order that it may not only form a perfect whole, but that each distinct joint may be found perfect. Thus, in whatever aspect we look at the Lord Jesus, we get divine perfection. He could say to God, "Thou hast tried Me, and shalt find nothing;" and God could answer, "I am well pleased." He could say of the devil, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing *in Me;*" and the devil could reply, "I know Thee, who thou art, *the Holy One of God.*" He could say to men, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" and man could answer, "Truly this was a *righteous man.*" Thus, I say, our divine burnt offering, who voluntarily presented Himself at God's altar, and there poured forth His most precious blood, was found, in every feature and in every aspect, pure and perfect in the very highest sense of the word, and confessed so by heaven, earth, and hell.

{We may also observe, in the act of cutting the offering into his pieces, this important truth, that in whatever relationship of life we contemplate the Lord Jesus, we find the same unsullied perfection whether we consider Him as a public or as a private character, in one position or another, all is alike. Not so with man — here there must be failure in one way or another. If a man is a good public character, he may be the very plague of the family circle, and vice versa. And, surely, in all this we learn the glorious truth which shall shortly be owned by all created intelligences, that "He alone is worthy." }

All, therefore, having been found pure, and fit for God's altar, it becomes the happy place of *Aaron's sons* to send up before God the sweet savour of this most acceptable offering, as we read: "And the *sons of Aaron* the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire. And *the priests, Aaron's sons,* shall lay the parts, the head and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar. But his *inwards and his legs* shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord" (vers. 7-9).

The fat of the offering was God's peculiar part; no one could with impunity touch that; yea, the punishment for so doing was the same as for eating blood; i.e., it was as wrong and as daringly presumptuous for a man to intrude upon God's portion of the offering as it was for him to assume life in his own right, which latter was an open denial of the state of death and ruin in which he was by reason of sin. God, then, I say, claimed the fat. He alone could feed upon the inward excellency and peerless perfections of Jesus, just as in the case of the unmeasured ointment in Exodus 30, where we see, as well as in the above cited passage, that the infinite mind of God could alone appreciate the infinite value of Christ. But we find *the head* burnt in connection with the fat, showing us, I suppose, that both the hidden energies of the Lord Jesus and the seat of His understanding were equally suited to be a sweet savour unto God. Lastly, the inwards and legs were washed and burned upon the altar, showing us that the secret thoughts, purposes and counsels of the Lord Jesus, as well as the outward development of these in His walk, were perfectly pure and fit for the altar: and, in connection with this last point, one cannot help dwelling with comfort upon the marvellous contrast between the Lord Jesus and His poor people. How often may our *outward walk*, typified by "the legs," appear quite right in the eye of man, when, at the same time, perhaps, in the eye of God, our "*inwards*" may be full of gross impurity. But it is well for us that such was not the case with our great Head: in Him all was alike, for all was pure. May our hearts enter more and more fully, under the teaching of the Spirit, into the intrinsic excellency of the Lord Jesus; and may we be enabled daily, standing at the altar before God, to send up in His presence the savour of all this!

As to the meat offering, we need not enter minutely into it. It was composed, as we know, of that

which sprang from the *earth*, and such as aptly shadowed out "the Man Christ Jesus, the frankincense thereon marking the entire devotedness of all the actings of Christ's human nature to God His Father. Nothing was done by Him to meet man's eye, or man's approbation; nothing was done to produce mere effect; no, *all was directly before God*. Whether we trace the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, while, for thirty years, *He was subject* to His parents at home; or while, for three years, He was engaged in public ministry amongst the Jews — all was alike: all showed forth the pure frankincense that marked Him, in all things, as God's peculiar and devoted servant. We may observe further that this meat offering was *baked* with oil, and *anointed* with oil; thus showing forth, I suppose, the incarnate Son of God, who was first "*conceived of the Holy Ghost*" (Matt. 1: 20), and then "*anointed with the Holy Ghost*" (Matt. 3: 16; Acts 10: 38).

We now come to speak of the sin offering, and may the Lord graciously refresh our spirits while dwelling for a little on the blessed principles unfolded therein. The sin offering is brought before us in Leviticus 4, from whence we may select one case for our present purpose. "If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people, then *let him bring* for his sin which he hath sinned a young bullock without blemish unto the Lord for a sin offering. And *he shall bring* the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord, and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head and kill the bullock before the Lord" (vers. 3-4).

The reader will, no doubt, observe a marked difference between the above passage and that in which the burnt offering was referred to; and the difference so far mainly consists in this, that in the last cited passage the words "*voluntary will*" are not found, and this was quite to be looked for. In the burnt offering we were enabled to recognise the Lord Jesus Christ *offering* Himself voluntarily before God, in which aspect of His blessed work He could say, "No man taketh it [My life] from Me, *I lay it down of Myself*." In other words, He offered Himself "of His own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord." But in the sin offering it is quite different: "*He shall be brought*" and "*He shall be killed*", i.e., instead of *coming*, *He shall be brought*; and instead of laying down His life *of Himself*, His life *shall be taken from Him*. These, I say, are important distinctions, and such as arise from the very nature of the two offerings. In the burnt offering the Lord Jesus is seen offering Himself in all the unblemished perfectness which belonged to Him; and in this His soul had great delight, because He was presenting that before God which was so acceptable to Him. But in the sin offering the Lord Jesus is seen standing in connection with that which His pure and spotless soul must have deeply abhorred and keenly resented — abhorred and resented, indeed, in a way of which we cannot form the faintest idea. He is seen, in a word, as standing in connection with *sin*: yea, more, as "made sin" (2 Cor. 5: 21). *Thus* it was that the prophet, through the Spirit, viewed Him when he said, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with *His stripes* we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53: 5-6).

Now I believe that by looking at the two offerings in connection we get a very deep and wondrous view of sin's dark and dreadful enormity in the sight of God: for sin in this point of view appears sinful just according to the measure of Christ's perfectness in God's account. If in the burnt offering we were enabled to see that such was the beauty and excellency of Christ that His whole man could go up before God as a sweet savour, and that God could "find nothing in Him" but perfection, as a necessary consequence then we must see in the sin offering the blackness and heinousness of sin, which could oblige God to hide His face from "His elect, in whom His soul delighted."

This brings us to the next point connected with the sin offering, viz., "He shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head" (ver. 4). Here we have at once the secret of the deep and profound mystery of the

three hours' darkness.

It was before observed that God had to hide His face from the Lord Jesus on the cross, but how are we to account for such a mysterious circumstance? Simply by the a words, "he (the sinner) shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head." If, in contemplating the burnt offering, we were struck by the fact that all the perfectness of the offering was communicated to the "fierce and cruel" Levi, so here we are called upon to adore the grace that devised the wondrous plan whereby that could be effected, which was by imputing to the offering all the sin and defilement of Levi, and dealing with the sin of Levi in the person of the sin offering, in order that Levi himself might be dealt with in the person of the burnt offering.

And all this, be it observed, is conveyed to us in the action of "the laying on of hands." This action was performed in both cases; i.e., Levi laid his hands on the head of the burnt-offering, and Levi laid his hands on the head of the sin offering. As to the act, it was the same in each case; but oh, how different the results! they were, in a word, as different as life and death, Heaven and hell, sin and holiness. In fact, we cannot conceive a wider contrast than that which is observable in the results of this action, to all appearance the same in each case. We may, perhaps, be able to form some idea of it by considering that the act of imposition of hands was at once the imputation of *sin* to one "*who knew no sin,*" but was "holy, harmless, undefiled," and whose very nature abhorred *all sin*. And, on the other hand, it was the imputation of *perfect righteousness* to one who was by nature "a cruel, fierce, and self-willed murderer"* Furthermore, the act of all worlds dwelt in the bosom of the Father to travel far away into the cold and barren regions of death and darkness, where the genial and life-giving rays of His Father's countenance, which He alone could truly appreciate, had never penetrated; and standing upon the confines of which, He cried "*If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!*" and again, when these gloomy regions, with their ten thousand unutterable horrors, burst upon His spotless soul, "My God, My God WHY HAST THOU forsaken Me?"

{*I would observe here that in speaking of "the imputation of righteousness," I by no means desire to be understood as giving any countenance to the prevailing theory of "the imputed righteousness of Christ." Of this expression, so much in use in the theology of the present day, it would be sufficient to say that it is nowhere to be found in the oracles of God. I read of "the righteousness of God" (Rom. 3 passim), and, moreover, of the imputation of righteousness (Rom. 4: 11), but never of "the righteousness of Christ." It is true, we read of the Lord Jesus being "*made of God* unto us righteousness" (Jer. 23: 6), but these, passages do not support the above theory. I would further add that the moral effect of this idea will be found to be decidedly pernicious because it *of necessity* supposes the believer as standing apart from the Lord Jesus, whereas the doctrine of Scripture is that the believer is "*made the righteousness of God IN HIM*" (2 Cor. 5: 21). And again, "*we are in Him* that is true, even in *His Son Jesus Christ*" (1 John 5: 20).}

And, on the other hand, it enabled the one who dwelt in "the habitations of cruelty," into whose "assembly" God could not come, to stand in the very blaze of the light of God's throne These considerations, I say, may perhaps assist our conceptions in some measure upon this astounding truth. Now, he apostle states the same truth in the didactic language of the New Testament when he says, "He [God] hath *made Him* to be *sin for us*, that *we* might be *made the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Cor. 5: 21). That is, He hath made the One whose perfectness is seen in the burnt offering to be judged as *sin*, and treated as such in the sin offering in order that *we*, who deserved the treatment of the sin offering, might be created as accepted in the burnt offering.

I would also observe here that there is much force and value in the word "*made*" it shows out

most fully that righteousness was just as foreign to the nature of man as sin was to the nature of Christ. Man had no righteousness of his own, or in other words, he knew no righteousness, and therefore he had to be "*made*" righteousness. Christ "*knew no sin*," and therefore had to be "*made sin*" in order that we might be *made* righteousness, even "the righteousness of God *in Him*." But further, we learn from the passage to which we are referring that the Lord Jesus having been "made sin for us," is not more real, not more true, not more palpable, than that the believer is "*made righteousness* in Him."

If there be any truth or reality in the record concerning the cross and passion of the Lord Jesus, then, it is plain that the moment a soul acts in faith upon Christ in His death and resurrection, that moment he is accepted in all the acceptableness of Christ. His consciousness of this is, of course, quite another question: a truth and the realisation of a truth are quite distinct.

The measure of our realisation will be in proportion to the measure of our communion with God. If we are satisfied to move at a cold and heartless distance from God, our consciousness of the power and value of any truth will, as a consequence, be meagre and shallow: while, therefore, it is not to be forgotten that the root and source of all life and communion is the truth stated in the passage to which we are alluding, it is manifest that the more we walk in communion with Him who gives us the life, the more shall we enjoy both Himself and the life which He gives. Dear Christian reader, let us pray that the cross and passion of the Lord Jesus may sink so deeply into our hearts that we may have on the one hand such a view of the loathsomeness of sin as shall lead us to abhor it with a holy abhorrence "all the days of our life," and on the other hand such a view of the amazing love of God as shall constrain us "to live not unto ourselves but unto Him who died for us and rose again."

Thus, then, we see that the laying on of hands shows forth nothing less than a *change of places* on the part of the sinner and the Saviour. The sinner was *out* of the favour of God: "O my soul, come not thou into their habitation." The Saviour was *in* the favour of God, "*daily His delight*," dwelling in His bosom from before all worlds. But the amazing plan of redemption *shows us the Saviour out of the favour of God, and God forsaking Him, while at the same time a condemned malefactor is brought at once into the very presence of a loving and pardoning God*. Amazing, deep, inconceivable, eternal love! unfathomable wisdom! love which soars far aloft above the most gigantic conception! wisdom which has written everlasting contempt upon all the power and base designs of the great enemy of God and man! For, ere Levi could be introduced into the enjoyment of the "covenant of *life and peace*" (Mal. 2: 5), a spotless Victim must stand the shock of the king of terrors and all his thunders. But who is this Victim? We ask not, "Who is this King of glory?" but Who is this Victim? The answer to this question it is which gives to the plan of redemption its grandest and most divine characteristic. The Victim was none less than the Son of God Himself! Yes! here was love, here was wisdom. The Son of God had to stoop because man had exalted himself. And surely we may say, If God had not entered upon the work, *all, all* were lost, and that forever. No mere mortal could have entered into that dark scene where sin was being atoned for; no one but the Son of God could have sustained the weight which, in the garden and on the cross, rested on the shoulders of the "One that was mighty." And here we might refer to the Lord's language to His disciples when He was about to enter into conflict with the adversary: "Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John 14: 30). Why could He not "talk much with them"? Because He was just going to enter upon the work of atonement, in which they could do nothing, because the prince of this world, had he come, would have had plenty in them, but then, the moment He, as it were, in spirit passes through that sorrowful hour, He says, "Arise, let us go hence"; i.e., although we could not move a single step in the achievement of the victory, yet we could enjoy the fruits of it; and not only so, but display the fruits of it in a life of service and fruit-bearing to God, which forms the subject of teaching

in the next chapter.

Here, then, is what gives peace to the awakened conscience of the sinner. God Himself has done the work. God has triumphed over all man's wickedness and rebellion, and now every soul who feels his need of pardon and peace can draw near in faith and holy confidence and reap the fruits of this wondrous triumph of grace and mercy.

And now, dear reader, if you have not as yet made these wondrous fruits your own; if you have not as yet cast the whole burden of your sins on God's eternal love as seen in the cross, I ask you, Why do you stand aloof? Why do you doubt? Perhaps you feel the hardness of your heart, perhaps you are ready to say that you feel yourself even now unmoved by the contemplation of all the deep sorrow endured by the Son of God. Well, what of that? If it be a question of *your* guilt, you may go much farther than even this, for in that hour of which we have been speaking you stood unmoved, looked on with cold and heartless indifference, while all creation owned the wondrous fact. Yea, more, you yourself crucified the incarnate God, you spat in His face, and plunged your spear into His side. Do you shrink back and say, "Oh, not so bad!" I say *it was the act of the human heart*; and if you have a human heart, it was your act. But the Scriptures at once decide this point, for it is written, "For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, *with the Gentiles* and the people of Israel, were gathered together" (Acts 4: 27). This passage, I say, proves that all the world were *representatively* around the cross. But why insist on this? Simply to show forth the riches of the grace of God, which can only be seen in all its effulgent lustre in the cross; and therein it is seen mounting far above all man's sin and malignant rebellion; for when man, in the fiendish pride of his heart, could plunge his ; spear into the side of incarnate Deity, God's cry was — BLOOD! and through that blood "*remission of sins, beginning at Jerusalem.*" A Thus, where *sin* abounded, *grace* did *much more abound*," and "grace REIGNS through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Enough, I trust, has been said to show the grounds upon which the Levites stood before God. These grounds were free and *eternal grace* — grace exercised toward them through the blood, which is the only channel through which grace can flow. Man has been found to be *utterly ruined* before God, and therefore it must be a question either of salvation through free grace, or eternal damnation; for by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh living be justified." But then, while man is by nature utterly unfit to render anything like an acceptable righteousness or service to God, yet, when God gives us *new life* through grace, He, of course, looks for the development of that life. In other words, grace brings the soul into circumstances of responsibility and service, and it is as we meet those circumstances that God is glorified in us and our souls grow in the knowledge of God. Thus it was in the case of the leper: up to a certain point in his history had nothing to do, the priest was the sole actor. But when the priest had done his part; when, by virtue of the blood which had been shed, he had pronounced him "clean," the leper had then to begin to "wash himself" (Lev. 14: 8). Now we shall find that the history of Levi develops all these principles most fully.

We have hitherto been engaged with Levi's condition and character by nature and also the wondrous remedy devised by grace to meet him in his lost estate, and not only to save him *from* that estate but also to raise him up to an elevation which could never have entered into the heart of man, even into the very tabernacle of God. We shall now, with God's blessing and grace, proceed to examine that high elevation to which we have referred, and also the service which it involved, as put before us in

Numbers 3:

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before

Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron, and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel" (verse 5-9).

Here, then, God's marvellous purposes of grace toward Levi fully open before us, and truly marvellous they are indeed. We see that the sacrifices were but a means to an end; but both the means and the end were in every way worthy of each other. The means were, in one word, "death and resurrection," *and all included therein*. The end was, *nearness to God, and all included therein*.

Looking at Levi by nature, there could not be any point farther removed from God than that at which he stood; but *grace* in exercise, through the blood, could *lift him up* out of that ruin in which he stood, and "bring him nigh," yea, bring him into association with the great head of the priestly family, there to serve in the tabernacle. Thus, we read, "You *hath He quickened who were dead* in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.... *But God*, who is *rich in mercy*, for His *great love* wherewith *He loved us*, even *when we were dead in sins*, hath quickened us *together with Christ* (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2: 1-6). And again, "*But now, in Christ Jesus*, ye who sometime were *afar off*, are *made nigh* by the blood of Christ" (ver. 13).

When *nature* is left free to work, it will ever go as far away from *God* as it can. This is true since the day when man said "I heard *Thy voice*, and I was *afraid* and I hid myself" (Gen. 3: 10). But when *grace* is left free and sovereign to work, it will ever *bring* the soul "nigh." Thus it was with Levi. He was by nature "*black as the tents of Kedar*"; by grace, "*comely as the curtains of Solomon*": by *nature* he was "*joined*" in a covenant of murder; by grace "*joined*" in a covenant of "life and peace." The former, because he was "*fierce and cruel*"; the latter, because he feared and was afraid of the Lord's name. (Cp. Gen. 49: 6-7; Mal. 2: 5). Furthermore, Levi was by *nature* conversant with the "instruments of cruelty"; by *grace*, with "*the instruments of God's tabernacle*: by *nature* God could not come into *Levi's assembly*; by *grace*, Levi is brought into *God's assembly*: by nature "his feet were swift to *shed blood*". by *grace*, *swift* to follow the movements of the cloud through the desert, in real, patient service to God. In a word, Levi had become a "*new creature*," and "old things had passed away," and therefore he was no longer to "live unto himself," but unto Him who had done such marvellous things for him in grace.

I would further observe, on the last cited passage, that the Levies are, in the first place, declared to be God's property, and then they are "WHOLLY GIVEN UNTO AARON." Thus we read: "*Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me, and they have kept Thy word*" (John 17: 6). And again, "All that *the Father giveth Me* shall come to Me" (John 6: 37).

I would now look a little into the detail of their service, in which, I doubt not, we shall find much to edify and refresh us.

We find that although the whole tribe of Levi were, *as to standing*, "*joined with Aaron*," yet, *as to service*, they were divided into classes. "All had not the same office;" and this is what we might have expected, for, although in the matter of *life* and *standing* they were all *on a level*, yet, in the development of that life, and in the manifestation of the power of that standing, they would, no doubt, display different measures; and not only so, but there would also be seen an assignment to each of distinct position and line of service, which would serve to distinguish him from his brethren in a very

marked and decided manner. And here I would observe that I know of nothing connected with the walk and service of the Christian which demands more attention than this point to which I am now alluding, viz., unity in the matter of life and standing, and at the same time the greatest variety in the manifestation of character and in the line of service. A due attention to this important point would save us from much of that "unwise" comparing of ourselves and our service with the persons and services of others, which is most unholy, and, as a consequence, most unhealthy.* And not only would it lead thus to beneficial results in a negative point of view, it would also have a most happy effect in producing and cultivating originality and uniqueness of Christian character. But while there was this diversity in the line of service amongst the Levites, it is also to be remembered that there was *manifested unity*. The Levites were one people, and seen as such; they were "*joined*" with Aaron in the work of the tabernacle; moreover, THEY HAD ONE STANDARD, round which they all rallied, and that was "the tabernacle of the congregation," the well known type of Christ in His character and offices. And, indeed, this was one of the ends which God had in view in calling out the Levites by His grace from amongst the people of Israel; it was that they should stand in marked association with Aaron and his sons, and in that association bear the tabernacle and all pertaining thereto on their shoulders, through the barren wilderness around.**

{*It is worthy the serious attention of the Christian reader who may desire the unity of the Church, that the tribe of Levi in the desert was a truly striking example of what may be termed "unity in diversity." Gershon was in one sense totally different from Merari, and Merari was totally different from Kohath; and yet Gershon, Merari and Kohath were one: they should not, therefore, contend about their service, because they were *one*; nor yet would it have been right to confound their services, because they were totally different. Thus, attention to *unity* would have saved them from contention, and attention to *diversity* would have saved them from confusion. In a word, all things could only be "done decently and in order" by a due attention to the fact of there being "unity in diversity."}

{**I say "one of the ends," for we should ever remember that the grand object before the divine mind in redemption is to show in the ages to come His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus; and this object will be secured even though our poor puny services had never been heard of.}

God did not call out the Levites merely that they might escape the sad effects of God's absence from their assembly; or, in other words, God had more than their blessing and security in view in His dealings with them. He designed that they should serve in the tabernacle, and thus be to His praise and glory. We shall, however, I trust, see this principle upon which I am dwelling in a clearer and stronger point of view as we proceed in our subject.

We find that Levi had three sons, viz., "Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari" (Num. 3: 17). These formed the heads of the three classes alluded to, and we shall find that the nature of the service of each was such as of necessity to impart that tone of character signified by their very name. Thus: "Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimites: these are the families of the Gershonites. And the chief of the house of the father of the Gershonites shall be Eliasaph, the son of Lael. And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation shall be the tabernacle and the tent, the covering thereof, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the hangings of the court, and the curtain for the door of the court, which is by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about, and the cords of it for all the service thereof" (ver. 21-26).

Here was Gershon's work, to carry through the waste and howling wilderness the tabernacle and its coverings. This was indeed *true Levite service*, but it was most blessed service, and its antitype in the Church now is what we should much seek after, because it is that which alone puts the Christian

into his right place in the world, i.e., the place of a stranger. There could be but little attractiveness in the rams' skins and badgers' skins; but, little as there was, it was, nevertheless, the high privilege of the Gershonite to take them all up and bear them cheerfully on his shoulders across the trackless sands. What, then, are we to understand by the covering of the tabernacle? I believe, in a word, it shadowed out the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was that which would meet the eye. There might be, and were, other services among the Levites of a very blessed nature, but surely it was most elevated service to carry through the desert that which so strikingly prefigured the character of Christ.

This is what makes the saint "a stranger" (as the name Gershon imports) in the world. If we are walking *in the manifestation of the character of the Lord Jesus*, and in so doing realise our place as *in the wilderness*, we may rest assured it will impart a very decided tone of strangership to our character in the world. And oh, would that we knew much more of this. The Church has laid down the rams' skins and badgers' skins, and with them the Gershonite character: in other words, the Church has ceased to walk in the footsteps of her rejected Lord and Master, and the consequence has been that instead of being the wearied and worn stranger, as she should be, treading the parched and sterile desert, with the burden on the shoulders, she has settled herself down in the green places of the world and made herself at home. But there was another feature of the stranger character shadowed out in the curtain, viz., *anticipation*. This was most blessed God dwelling in curtains showed plainly that neither God nor the ark of His strength had found a resting-place, but were *journeying on* towards "*a rest that remained*."

And how could there be *a rest* in the desert? There were no rivers and brooks *there* — no old corn *there* — no milk and honey *there*. True, the smitten rock sent forth its refreshing streams to meet their need, and Heaven sent down their *daily bread*; but all this was not Canaan. They were still in the desert, eating wilderness food and drinking wilderness water, and it was Gershon's holy privilege to carry upon his shoulders that which in the fullest manner expressed all this, viz., THE CURTAIN. "Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build Me an house for Me to dwell in? Whereas I have not *dwelt* in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have *walked in a tent* and in a *tabernacle*" (2 Sam. 7: 5-6). Here, too, we have sadly failed. The Church grew weary of the curtain, and wished to build a house before the time; she grew weary of "*walking in a tent*," and earnestly desired to " *dwell in a house*."

And truly we have all to watch and pray against this disposition to grow weary of our Gershonite character. There is nothing so trying to nature as continual labour in a state of expectancy; our hearts love rest and fruition, and therefore nothing but the continual remembrance that "our sufficiency is of God" can at all sustain us in our Gershon or stranger condition.

Let us therefore remember that we bear on our shoulder the curtains, and have beneath our feet the sand of the desert, above our heads the pillar of cloud, and before us "the land of rest" clothed in never-withering green, and, both as a stimulus and a warning, let us remember that "He that endureth to the end THE SAME shall be saved."

{It would surely be of all importance in this day, when so many are declining from the narrow path of obedience to the written Word, and entering upon the wide and bewildering field of human tradition, to bear in mind that the Levite, when carrying the tabernacle through the desert, found no support nor guide *from beneath*: no, the *grace* in which he stood was his *sole support*, and the *pillar above* his *sole guide*. It would have been miserable indeed had he been left to find a guide in the footmarks on the sand, which would change at every wind that blew *But all the sand did for him was to add to his labour and toil while he endeavoured to follow the heavenly guide above his head.*}

We shall next consider the Merarite feature of character; for, although the family of Merari does not stand next in order in the chapter, yet there is a kindredness of spirit, as it were arising out of the very nature of their service, that would link them together in the mind. But, not only is there this intimate connection between the services of these two classes of Levites, which would lead us to link them together thus, the Lord Himself presents them to us in marked unity of service, for we read, "And the Kohathites set forward bearing the sanctuary; and *the other* (i.e., the Gershonites and the Merarites) *did set up the tabernacle against they came*" (Num. 10: 21). Here, then, we see that it was the great business of these two families to pass onward through the desert in holy companionship, bearing with them, wherever they went, "*the tabernacle,*" and, moreover, the tabernacle as looked at in its character of outward manifestation or testimony; which would, as a matter of course, put those who carried it thus into a place of *very laborious* discipleship. "And under the custody and charge of the sons of Merari shall be the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof, and all the vessels thereof, and all that serveth thereto, and the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords" (Num. 3: 36-37). Here, then, was what Merari had to do: he had to take his place here or there, according to the movement of the cloud, and set up the boards of the tabernacle in their sockets of silver — and all this, be it remembered, upon the sand of the desert.

{It has been well observed that in the tabernacle God was seen bringing all His glory into immediate connection with the *sand of the desert*: and when the high priest went into the holy place, he found himself in the very presence of that glory, with his feet upon the *sand of the desert likewise*. In the temple, however, this was not the case, for the floor of the house was *overlaid with gold* (1 Kings 6: 30).

So is it with the Christian now he has not as yet his feet upon the "pure gold" of the heavenly city, but his deepest and most abiding knowledge of God is that which he obtains in connection with his sorrow, toil and conflict in the wilderness.}

Could anything be more opposed to another than the nature of all that Merari had to set up was to the waste and howling wilderness around? What could be more unlike than silver and barren sand? But Merari might not shrink from all this; no, his language was, when he had arrived at a spot in the desert at which the cloud halted, "I am come to set up the patterns of things in heaven in the very midst of all the desolation and misery of the wilderness around." All this was most laborious, and would, no doubt, impart to the character of Merari a tone of sadness or sorrow which was at once expressed in his name, which means "*sorrow.*"

And surely the antitype of all this in the Church now will fully confirm what has been stated about the character of Merari. Let any one take his stand firmly and decidedly in the world *for Christ* — let him penetrate into those places where "*the world*" is really seen in its vigour — let him oppose himself, *firm* as a rock, to the deep and rapid tide of worldliness, and *there* let him begin to set up "*the sockets of silver,*" and, rest assured of it, he will find such a course attended with very much sorrow and bitterness of soul; in a word, he will realise it to be a path in which the cross is to be taken up "*daily,*" and not only taken up, but borne. Now, if any further proof were needed of the above interpretation, we have a most striking one in the fact that there are but *very few* of the laborious Merarite character to be found; and why is this? Simply because the exhibition of such a character will ever be attended with very much labour and sorrow to nature, and nature loves ease, and therefore human nature never could be a Merarite; nothing will make us true Merarites but deep communion with Him who was "THE MAN OF SORROWS."

There is something in the service of Gershon from which one does not shrink so much as from that of Merari. For what had Gershon to do? He had to place the curtains and badgers' skins over the boards which *had been already set up by his laborious and sorrowful brother*. And just so now: if a laborious servant of God has gone to a place where hitherto the world and Satan have reigned supreme, and there raised a testimony for Christ, it will be comparatively easy for another to go and walk on in the simple *manifestation* of Christian character, which would of itself put him into the place of "a stranger."

But, although nature may assume the character of a misanthropist, yet nothing but grace can make us Merarites, and the *true Merarite* is the *true philanthropist*, because he introduces that which alone *can bless*; and the very fact that a Merarite should have to take a place of sorrow is a most convincing proof that the world is an evil place. There was no need of a Merarite in Canaan, nor a Gershonite either: for the Merarite was *happy there*, and the Gershonite *at home*. But the world is not the Levite's home, and therefore if any will carry the curtains, he must be a stranger; and if any will carry the sockets and boards, he must be a man of sorrow; for when He who was a true Gershonite and a true Merarite came into the world He was emphatically *the Man of sorrows, who had not where to lay His head*.

However, if the Gershonite and the Merarite had to occupy a place in which they endured not a little of "the burden and heat of the day," yet the Lord graciously met them in that with a very rich reward, for "He is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love," and therefore, if they had to labour and toil *amongst* their brethren, they were blessedly ministered to *by* their brethren. Thus we read concerning the offerings of the princes: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service. And Moses took the wagons and the oxen and gave them unto the Levites. Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service. And four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. *But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none*, because *the service of the sanctuary* belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders" (Num. 7: 4-9).

Here we see that the service of Gershon and Merari was that which met the rich and blessed ministrations of their brethren. Grace had filled the hearts and affections of the princes, and not only filled but overflowed them, and in its overflow it was designed to refresh the spirits of the homeless Gershonite and sorrowful Merarite: on the other hand, the Kohathites had no part in these ministrations; and why? Because *their service*, as we shall see presently, was in *itself* a rich reward indeed. We see the very same doctrine taught in the case of the Levites generally, as contrasted with the priests, in chap. 18, where we read: "And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither *shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel*" (ver. 20).

On the other hand, He says of the Levites, "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel *for an inheritance, for their service which they serve*, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation."

And again, "Ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households, *for it is your reward* for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation" (ver. 21, 31).

Aaron occupied a position so truly elevated that any inheritance in the way of earthly things would have been to him most degrading; whereas the Levites (looked at in one aspect) had not this high

standing, but had much hard labour; and consequently, while Aaron's very place and service was "*his reward*," the Levites had to get *a tenth* for "*their reward*."

We come now to consider the third and last division of the Levites, viz., the Kohathites, of whom we read, "The families of the sons of Kohath shall pitch on the side of the tabernacle southward. And the chief of the house of the father of the families of the Kohathites shall be Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. And their charge shall be the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the hanging, and all the service thereof" (Num. 3: 29-31). We can now have no difficulty in understanding why it was that Kohath had no share in the ministrations of the princes. Gershon and Merari might need wagons and oxen to carry the boards, etc., but not Kohath; his charge was too precious to be committed to any or aught but himself, and therefore it was his high and honoured place to carry all upon his shoulders. What a privilege, for example, to be allowed to carry *the ark, the table, or the golden candlestick!* And would it not have argued an entire absence of ability to appreciate his elevated calling if he had sought for the assistance of oxen in his holy service? What, then, we ask, would have been the effect produced upon the character of Kohath by this his service? Would it not have imparted a very elevated tone thereto? Surely it would. What can be more elevated, at least as far as development of character in the world is concerned, than the display of that congregational spirit which is expressed in the name of Kohath? Should not Christians be found rebuking, by a *real union in everything*, man's oft-repeated attempt at forming associations for various purposes? And how can they effect that if it be not by gathering more closely around their common centre, Christ, in all the blessed fullness and variety of that Name? a foulness and variety typified by the varied furniture of the tabernacle, some of the most precious parts of which were designed to be borne on the shoulders of this favoured division of the tribe of Levi.

And surely we may safely assert that what would lead the saints now into more of the congregational spirit is just communion with Him whom the ark and table shadowed forth. If we were more conversant with Christ as the ark, covering in this scene of death, and, moreover, with the table of showbread, whereon stood *the food of the priests* — if, I say, we knew more of Christ in these blessed aspects of His character — we should not be as we are, a proverb and a byword by reason of our gross disunion. But, alas, as the Church grew weary of the curtains and the boards, and laid aside her Gershonite and Merarite character, so has she laid aside her Kohathite character, because she has ceased to carry the ark and the table upon her shoulder, and cast those precious pearls which were, through the grace of God, her peculiar property, to the swine, and thus has she lost her elevated character and position in the world.

Thus, let us review those three grand features of character shown forth in the tribe of Levi.

Strangership. "Therefore the world *knoweth us not*, because it knew Him not." "Here we have no abiding city." "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as *strangers* and *pilgrims* abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

Sorrow in the world. "*In the world ye shall have tribulation*." "If they have *persecuted Me*, they will also *persecute you*." "*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*." "After that *ye have suffered awhile*, make you perfect" — "ye have need of patience" — "ye yourselves know that ye are appointed thereunto." "If we *suffer* with Him, we shall also reign with Him." "These are they that came out of *great tribulation*, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Union. "That they *all may be one*." "He should gather together in *one* the children of God that are *scattered* abroad." "That He might reconcile *both* unto God in *one* body by the cross." And here, again,

I would request of my reader to bear in mind that, while there was this beautiful diversity in the character and line of service of the Levites, yet they were *one people*, and *that manifestly* — they were *one in life, one in standing, one in calling, one in inheritance*; and so should it be with Christians *now*. We are not to expect uniformity of opinion on every point, nor yet are we to look for a perfect correspondence in the line of service and development of life; but then the saints should be seen as *one people* — *one in worship,* one in labour, one in object, one in sympathy*; in a word, *one in everything that belongs to them in common as the people of God.*

{*I say, *one in worship* and I would press this point, because at the present day it seems to be a thought in the minds of many that there may be unity in service and at the same time the greatest diversity in worship I would appeal to the spiritual mind of the Christian reader, and I would ask him, Can this really be? What should we say to a family who would unite, or appear to do so, for the purpose of carrying on their father's work, but who could not, by reason Of division, meet around their fathers table? Could such unity satisfy a father who loved his children}

How sadly out of order it would have been for a Levite to call upon one of the uncircumcised of the nations around to assist him in carrying any part of the tabernacle! and yet we hear Christians now justifying and insisting upon the propriety of conduct not less disorderly, viz., calling upon the openly unconverted and profane to put their hands to the Lord's work. Thus we see that the Levites have become scattered, and have forsaken their posts. The Gershonite has refused to carry the curtains because he has become weary of the stranger condition; the Merarite has laid down the boards and sockets because he grew weary of bearing the cross, and the Kohathite has degraded his high and holy office by making it the common property of those who have not authority from God to put their hands thereunto. Thus the name of God is blasphemed among the heathen by us, and we do not "sigh and cry for the abominations" thus practised, but lift up our heads in proud indifference as if it all were right and as if the camp of God were moving onward in all heavenly order, under the guidance of the cloud, communicated by the silver trumpets. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." May we walk more humbly before our God, and, while we mourn over the sad fact that "Overturn, overturn, overturn" has been written by the finger of God upon all human arrangements, let us remember that it is only "until *He come whose right it is,*" and then *all* shall be set right forever, for God, in all things, shall be fully glorified through Jesus Christ.

Thus dear reader, have we followed Levi in his course; and oh, what a marvellous course has it been! a course, every step of which displays the visible marks of sovereign grace abounding over man's sin — grace, which led God to stoop from His throne in the heavens to visit "the habitations of cruelty," in order to lift a poor perishing sinner from thence, and bring him, through the purging power of the blood, into a place of marvellous blessing indeed, even into the very tabernacle of God, there to be employed about the instruments of God's house. We have found Levi to have been indeed the one who "was *dead* and is *alive again*, who was *lost* and is found."

May we, then, adore the grace that could do such mighty acts! and if we have felt in our hearts the operations of the same grace in delivering us from the death and darkness of Egypt, may we remember that its effects should be to constrain us to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. We are now in the wilderness, where we are called to carry the tabernacle. May we cheerfully move onward, "*declaring plainly that we seek a country,*" and *anxiously look out the "the rest that remains."*