

nothing. Love suffereth long and is kind: love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness but rejoiceth with the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth." In a word (Prov. x. 12): "All sins are covered by—*love!*"

S. M. SCHILLER-SZINESSY.

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

VII. NATIONAL REVIVAL.—CHAPS. XII. XIII.

THE prophecies of this book close with predictions of the political importance and military glory of the Jewish people. This future greatness is somehow to be connected with or even to spring out of a poignant national repentance. The cause of this repentance is obscure, but apparently the nation is to be by some means awakened to its undutifulness and disloyalty to its Divine King. The people are to look upon Him whom they have pierced, and to mourn.

Stress is laid upon the circumstance that the repentance will be national and universal: "The land shall mourn every family apart." Once or twice in each generation there occur calamities, such as the Indian mutiny or the Crimean war, when the mourning is not merely national but domestic, not merely domestic but national. As when the firstborn of Egypt was slain, the death-wail rises from every household. The calamity is general, yet each feels as if it were peculiar to himself.

Natural as it is to look for the fulfilment of this prediction in the days succeeding the crucifixion of Christ, it cannot be said that in those days there was anything which could be called a national repentance. The awe which

fell upon those who saw the Messiah die and who retired smiting their breasts probably soon passed away. On the part of the rulers there might for a few days be an uneasy shamefacedness. There might be vague fears during the silence of the night entering the minds of the thoughtful. There might be more animated discussions of the claims of Jesus, or a careful avoidance of the subject. But certainly even the revolution of feeling produced by the preaching of Peter was circumscribed and far from being national.

Individuals have in all ages accepted their share of guilt in the crucifixion of Christ. Penitents have never shrunk from owning that but for their guilt Christ had not died. But this is far from fulfilling the prediction of a simultaneous, national, Jewish mourning, such as is here spoken of. Only the one nation which crucified the Messiah is capable of such a repentance. No other nation has this particular guilt of rejecting and crucifying their long-expected king, for whom they existed as a nation and apart from whom they seem to have no *raison d'être*. They only can exhibit a national repentance for this crime; they only can nationally reverse the verdict they passed upon their King.

And I believe that nothing would more rapidly accomplish the happy results depicted in these chapters, or more speedily win the world to Christ, than were the Jews to complete their marvellous history by once again combining, and this time to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. The remorse would be terrible, a bitterness as of one "mourning for his only son;" so terrible that no one can wonder that the Jews cannot think of it as a possible thing that they should have crucified their Messiah. And yet what event could be so exemplary to the world? Who could be such efficient missionaries as the countrymen of Paul, who are already found in every country and speaking every important language? The Jews themselves have never ceased to look forward to some national resuscitation. They have

fallen away from some of their old beliefs and usages and hopes, but there seems ever to spring up again among them the expectation that they shall yet have a land and a king of their own. A Christian cannot fail to think that there is a finer consummation of their great history, and a future more profitable to the human race.

Here then we have a prediction of a national revival first manifesting itself and striking its fruitful root in a profound sorrow for past dereliction of duty, and developing into a craving for cleansing from all defilement and for severance from all that has characterized the sinful past. These are signs which accompany all revivals of religious life which spring from God's will and the outpouring of His Spirit.

There is, first, a looking upon Him whom we have pierced and a being in bitterness on His account. The applicability of this passage to the contrition awakened by the cross of Christ will not be questioned even by any who may believe that the prophecy has no positive reference to our Saviour. Certainly the most effective knowledge of sin and the most fruitful contrition are produced by a consideration of the significance of Christ's death. The bitterness of mourning produced by the cross has a healing virtue in it. Bitterness of a similar kind every one has felt. We know what it is to bewail the results of our sin when we see these results in the grief and shame and suffering of our friends. We have done a selfish action, aiming at our own happiness without sufficient consideration of others, and now we see that owing to this action of ours, some innocent persons whom we love are compelled to pass a life of lessened happiness and to bear a burden all their days. This brings us daily compunction and sorrow. The parent sees that in his child which day by day speaks to him of his own heedlessness and folly and transgression, and the difficulties with which the innocent child has to contend bring the bitterest of reflections to the heart of the parent.

Or the son, on the other hand, who at length recognises how ill he has requited a parent's love and has embittered and darkened the life he should have gladdened, when he looks on the unreproachful, loving face of him or her whom his ruthlessness has pierced, feels a bitter compunction and a keener distress than any disaster could inflict.

“ What spectre can the charnel send
So dreadful as an injured friend ? ”

If, as time rolls on, we come to see how much trouble and suffering our sins have brought into the lives of others, if we are compelled to recognise how frequently and sorely our sins which we thought concerned no one but ourselves have smitten others, we know the bitterness that accompanies the looking upon those whom we have pierced. Nothing brings a man lower in his own eyes; nothing so directly persuades him that sin is a real evil. To have blighted our own life is bitter, but to see others suffering in consequence of our wrong-doing is the extreme of humbling pain.

But the analogy used by the prophet is of a slightly different kind. He compares the sorrow out of which springs this national repentance, to the national mourning at the death of the good king Josiah, when the whole nation bewailed him, driven in as he was to Jerusalem sorely hit by the archers, and his life's blood dripping from his chariot. Now, when we read the account of Josiah's death we find this circumstance brought out in the narrative, namely, that he perished in a cause with which he was not compelled to mix himself up, but which his kingly spirit prompted him to make his own. When Necho, king of Egypt, came with his troops to Carchemish, he sent ambassadors to Josiah, saying, “ What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste; forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with

me, that He destroy thee not." But Josiah's sense of honour prevented him from listening to this warning; he went to battle and was pierced to his death. And as the people saw him brought home, his armour stained with blood, their mourning was tenfold more bitter, because they knew it was not in any private quarrel of his own he had fallen, but had died as their king, sacrificed to his position and his own sense of what was due to his position as prince of Judah. Each one of them felt that noble as his life had been, his death had been nobler still; and that, true king, servant and representative of his people as he had ever shown himself in his life, he had never better borne his people's burden than when he entered that fatal battle which the weaknesses and sins of former generations and of his own people had made necessary. And they mourned him now as one whom they had pierced—not that their loyal hands would ever have inflicted those wounds which the Egyptian arrows had torn in his flesh, but because they were conscious that it was for them and in their cause he had fallen, and because they bitterly understood now how heavy and fatal a burden was the crown of a nation like theirs. They felt that they were chargeable with his death, inasmuch as it was their quarrel he had espoused and in their cause he had died. His blood had been spilt in discharging their political duties and in redeeming their political mistakes. And the citizen who had that day gone apart to carry on business of his own, and whose own private and present prosperity prevented him from shedding a tear over the fallen king, would have been justly denounced as a heartless traitor with no right to any inheritance in Judah. The man who had not public spirit enough to feel that in a most true sense his king had died for him, for his home and liberty—the man who could not understand what the people meant by crying in the streets "we have pierced our king"—that man might well have been denounced as incredibly selfish, unpardonably bound

up in his own narrow prosperity, the very worst kind of citizen.

And it is only the profound and dull-eyed selfishness that naturally possesses us which can prevent us from joining in the acknowledgment that we have pierced our King, and from feeling the bitterest compunction on this account. Only because He made our cause His own did our Lord suffer and die. Only because He undertook all our liabilities and accomplished what He saw the world chiefly needed did He suffer as He did. And to disclaim any connexion with His death is to renounce our claim to be within His kingdom, and to depart on a private path of our own which can only bring us to increasing isolation and uselessness.

A second feature of the national revival here predicted was that there should be "a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," so that the contamination and defilement of which any and all were conscious, might be removed. The self-loathing produced by a sense of sin's pollution, prevents men from expecting any great future. And conscience seems to pronounce that for this self-loathing there is no remedy. The murderess looks at the stained hands in despair, and cries—

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No: this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red."

And all men are dismayed to find how deeply the pollution of former sins cuts into the character and the life, and dims the lustre of all we are concerned in. Years of varied experience may stand between our old transgressions and our present state, but the defilement, like an unstanched wound, strikes through all that overlays it. More needful than even forgiveness is cleansing. No man can be happy while filled with self-loathing: nothing tends to make men so content

with their old level as the sense of self-defilement. Were we conscious of spotless garments, we should strive to keep them clean ; but spotted as they already are, what boots it to avoid specks that will add nothing to the stains already existing? Thus we cease to connect ourselves with any true spiritual glory in the future, and become resigned to a condition on which the trail of sin is everywhere seen.

Provision therefore is made for ridding men of this sense of defilement, which lies deeper than the fear of punishment and cuts the sinew of all effort. It is removed, so far as it can be removed, when the desire and hope of a new and pure character are sincerely cherished ; when we cease to sympathize with our old self, and are no longer partakers in our own old sins ; when the connexion is cut between our old life and that which we now live. And this germ of a new life is sown in us when we believingly listen to the call of Christ. "Now ye are clean," said our Lord to His disciples, "through the word which I have spoken unto you." They were conscious of perfect integrity in receiving the call of Christ. They had no repentances, no regrets for having chosen Him. They wished to be His and His only. In this new sense of devotedness to Christ their old sense of defilement was abolished. It is attachment to Christ, and belief in the power of this attachment to root evil out of the heart, that makes us new men. And in proportion as we are hearty and sincere in our devotion to Him are we conscious of integrity and purity, of inward cleanness.

A third feature which should characterize this great national revival is indicated in the words (xiii. 2), "I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land." And so thorough was to be the revulsion from the state of feeling which could encourage false prophets, that even the parents of any one who presumed to prophesy would thrust him through. In many countries, more or less civilized, there are at the present day large numbers of

men who gain their livelihood by exercising those functions which are here denounced ; divining, soothsaying, casting out evil spirits, and so forth. And the existence of such false prophets implies the existence of a large amount of unbelief, superstition, and ignorance. Instead of endeavouring to detect the real criminal by the ordinary cross-examination of witnesses, and other ways of sifting evidence, one of these diviners is invited to point out the culprit, so that justice is upset. Instead of endeavouring to discover the real cause of disease, and so prevent its recurrence, a diviner is asked to perform certain magical rites by the bedside of the patient, so that all medical science is nipped in the bud. And worst of all, these false prophets are looked to as able to explain God's will and pry into the secrets of heaven, so that all application of the individual soul to God is discouraged and prevented. In Judah many had gained a living by fortune-telling, by offering to get messages from the dead for the guidance of the living, and by professing to have special revelations from God about matters of state. This was to poison the stream of knowledge at its source. The very men who should have guided the people became their perverters, and led them astray. And one of the most welcome symptoms of a new state of matters would therefore be the entire cessation of such false teaching. If a lad showed a leaning towards divination and soothsaying, his very parents would put him to death. And so alive would the whole people become to the evil and wickedness of such courses, that no man would dare to assume the peculiar dress of the prophets or to be in any way recognised as a prophet. It was only when indelible marks were found upon his body, which proved that he had been convicted of divination and punished for it, that any one would be brought to confess that such was his profession.

It will be observed that to apply the words of the sixth verse to our Lord, because there is a mention of wounds

in the hands, is out of the question. It is indeed almost blasphemous to refer to Him words which were originally levelled against the very worst class of *false* prophet. And that the words have sometimes been so applied, is only another illustration of the ignorant and irreverent recklessness with which phrases from the Old Testament are dislocated from their context and are perverted to utterly alien uses.

Every revival of religion in the individual or the community must go hand in hand with zeal for the truth, with the renunciation of superstition and ignorance. These false prophets both in Judah and in other lands have been driven out before the advance of truth of every kind, scientific as well as religious. All truth belongs to God and tends to His glory. Science is His as much as religion. "The world is His and the fulness thereof," and whatever can be found in that world will help on His cause. You deaden the power of idolatry and false religion now by sending to the heathen scientific medical men and teachers, as well as by sending evangelists. Delivering them from the thralldom of error and superstition, you bring them so much nearer to truth and to God. And we ourselves also have doubtless much to learn from science, which will give us wider and deeper views of God and of all truth. And it is the man who is most at one with His Lord who will most fearlessly welcome every fresh light that dawns upon His mind, knowing that all light tends to reveal Him who is Himself in all and through all.

The superstition that prevails in our own religious views and practices, as well as the superstition that prevails in Romanism, will be dispelled by that light which comes together with religious warmth. Our hope lies in the continuance of resolute serious-minded enquiry into religious matters. Serious men will in the long run be drawn where there is freest access to the truth. If we imitate the

Church of Rome, and say that the Church has the truth and that the individual has no right to enquire but only to learn, our day is done. Our day is done when among us men see what they saw in Rome :

“ Strength by limping sway disabled,
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly (doctor-like) controlling skill,
And simple truth miscalled simplicity.”

The great danger in our day in connexion with the Church of Rome is that men fling themselves into her arms to be protected from the terrifying images of doubt that crowd our atmosphere. Some of the ablest, most devout and godly, most saintly and Christ-like, most influential and sincere of our contemporaries have left their Protestant position and have joined the Church of Rome. And the moving cause in the case of some of them is, that being of an irrepressibly enquiring mind, and having at once a most earnest *desire* to believe and a subtle disposition that suggests all manner of difficulties and doubts, they have felt that the exercise of private judgment was a heavier burden than they could carry. They have foreseen that enquiry in their case would be endless, that they could never satisfy their own subtle intellects ; they have feared they might become sceptics ; and shrinking from this as the most painful issue, they have put an end to their hesitation by renouncing private judgment and submitting themselves to the living voice of God in the Church. The process of mind that results in such action is illogical, inconsistent, self-stultifying ; but it is frequently rather a process of feeling than a process of thought which guides men to the Church of Rome. And the process of feeling is something like this : I wish to be a child of God, I wish to be religious, I need a Father for my spirit ; but I cannot satisfy myself about Christianity ; there are difficulties I cannot solve ; I must therefore conceive of religion as

a matter regarding which I am to follow my instincts rather than my logical faculty, and I therefore give up the attempt to satisfy my intellect in this sphere and yield myself to that great Church which has most prominently and in all ages represented Christianity.

Wherever then you find that rare combination of a profoundly religious nature with a subtle sceptical mind, there you will also find that the Church of Rome has attractions. Practically that Church retains her hold by providing a religion that has nothing to do with the intellect or with external evidences. The Church presents itself as the great evidence of religion, as the present manifestation of Christ.

And however hard a battle Rome may have to fight with reason and science in the coming years, Protestantism will have no less difficulty in adopting and adjusting to the fundamentals of her creed, all that science brings to light, and all the new and larger ideas that the progress of events will discover. We cannot, like Romanism, declare science our foe. Protestantism and science are allies and blood relations, and if we are to maintain our religious life at all, it must be in the full blaze of modern discovery and intellectual light, and not among the moles and bats, in the holes where the relics of superstition have had their haunt.

MARCUS DODS.
