

SAMUEL.

WHO was Samuel? Of what tribe of Israel was his father Elkanah? Such were the questions put to the writer, a few days ago. Yes, these questions are important, inasmuch as the history of Samuel is so full of instruction for the very time in which we live.

Samuel was not only of the tribe of Levi, but he was of the very family of Korah, whose children were spared, in sovereign distinguishing grace, from going down alive into the pit; at that very time that Korah, and all the men that appertained to him, and the families of Dathan and Abiram, went down into the pit, and the earth closed upon them. The account of this we read in Numbers xxi. From what we find there, we might conclude that the children of Korah perished also in this dreadful judgment on the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. In another chapter we read, "And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, together with Korah; when that company died; what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men; and they became a sign. *Notwithstanding, the children of Korah died not.*" (Num. xxvi. 9-11.)

Of that family was Elkanah (Redeemed of God). Such was his name. As has already been dwelt upon in the tract on Shiloh,* this

* "From Egypt to Shiloh." G. Morrish, London.

family was the one chosen of God to illustrate what is pleasing to the Lord, in these very last days, after centuries in which the true and only divine principle of gathering to the name of the Lord had been practically lost.

That which preceded, or introduced the restoration of that place, which the Lord had chosen, in the days of Samuel, was the picture of the Redeemer-Bridegroom, in the beautiful book of Ruth. In like manner, that which preceded or introduced the restoration of the knowledge of the Lord present, wherever two or three are gathered in His name, was the re-unfolding of Jesus the Redeemer-Bridegroom.

In this day of rapid increase of wickedness and soul-destroying doctrine, which is coming in like a flood, it is surely of great importance to seek to help the perplexed to understand what is the remedy, and what is really pleasing to the Lord in these last days. Let us dwell a little on the character of Samuel and his family, for present help and guidance.

He was then the child of Hannah (grace and mercy) and Elkanah (God has redeemed). How far, dear earnest inquirer, do you answer to this? Have you been born anew, through grace, the free favour of God, and the depths of His mercy? And can you say that God hath redeemed you to Himself, and at such a cost? And can you say, I am of that family saved from going down into the pit? If God had dealt in righteous judgment on us, might we not have been crying for a drop of water to cool our tongues? If we really believe this, it will make us little in our own eyes.

Such was Samuel. His mother prayed for

him in bitterness of soul, at the only place on earth where the Lord had set His name. (1 Sam. i.; Jer. vii. 12.) And when the Lord had answered her prayer, she brought him to that place which the Lord had chosen, when He had brought His people into the land, and had given them rest. To this very place Samuel was brought. He was a little weaned child, dedicated through the death of an offering, and was a worshipper. How far is all this true of us? Are we little in our own eyes? Are we weaned from this world? Separated from it by the death of Christ? And are we worshippers in spirit and in truth? This is the only condition of soul in which we can have an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Thus was Samuel dedicated to the Lord, at the place which the Lord had chosen to place His name, and which had been almost forgotten. Hannah not only brought him unto the *place*, but also unto the *Lord*. Many in this day may have been brought to the *place*, but not to the Person of the Lord.

Hence, when difficulties arise, they are perplexed, and say, All is lost, all is over. Not so the words of Samuel's mother, in her marvellous prayer of faith. (Read 1 Sam. ii. 1-10.) The Lord Himself is before her soul. "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord." He filled her soul. There was none other, "none holy as the Lord, none beside thee, neither is there any rock like our God." What is the arrogant boast of that day, or of this, to a soul thus before the Lord? Blessed Lord, when Thou shinest forth in Thy glory, all must fade away; all human, or even all created lights, must disappear. The range of

divine truth, now reported to us, is truly wonderful, far beyond the day in which these truths were uttered.

If we ask, How does the Lord quicken a soul and give life? Hannah replies, "The Lord killeth and maketh alive, He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." And who are they the Lord hath chosen to bring to Himself? "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dung hill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." Think what is involved in these few words, as revealed to us now by the Holy Ghost. How utterly beyond all human thought. Do the learned of this world know that the whole fallen race of man, however religious, is but a vast dung-heap of fallen humanity? What a discovery was this to the learned Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus! Reviewing his blameless life under law, with all his learning and innumerable advantages, he says, "I do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him," &c. Oh, ye learned Universities; oh, ye bishops, doctors, and divines; oh, ye cultivators of the human mind, how long have ye tried to improve the loathsome dung-heap! Will ye never learn the secret of a Hannah, or a Paul? Will you never know the truth?

In perfect keeping with Ephesians ii., Hannah says what God does, not what the beggar of the dung-hill says or does.

Yes, God raiseth them up. He lifteth them up out of one place into another—from the dung-hill to inherit the throne of glory. God has no lift short of this, from the lowest to the

highest. Oh, my soul, rejoice in the riches of His grace.

God separated Israel from the nations. God sent His Son to that separated nation, His own nation; but they rejected that beloved Son, and killed Him. God knew the enmity of that act of Jew and Gentile; and God looked down on that seething dung-hill of humanity, and right down from that *glorified Man* on the throne of glory: He sent the Holy Ghost, and He said, as it were, I will take out of that dung-heap, out of that loathsome place, the poor, vile, ragged, guilty beggars of that dung-heap, a company, to inherit with my Son, His throne of glory. What a place! What a state of immutable purity and glory! Yes, unblameable in holiness, lifted up to be with God Himself.

Well may the apostle say, "According to the riches of his grace." All this can only have its fulfilment in the church, the bride. And, mark, the purpose of God will be fulfilled. There is just one anxious question some of my readers might like to ask Hannah. Is it this, "May my feet not slip so far, that I may so fail, as, after all, to be lost; and, instead of the throne of glory, like and with my Lord, may I not be lost at last, and sink to the lowest hell?" What says the inspired Hannah? Listen, "He will keep the feet of his saints." Not "I," but "He," "will keep the feet of his saints."

But many say, "We may be lost, and He may fail to keep the feet of His saints." Ah, they do not know Him, or they would not doubt Him. He has given too much for His sheep, to let one of them be lost. He says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me;

and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John x. 27.)

Some may say, Oh, that is a very dangerous doctrine. What! is there danger in the words and unchanging love of Jesus? Suppose a person is a professor, and yet practising sin, is such an one safe and sure to be saved at last, and inherit the throne of glory? Jesus says, "And they follow me." Is practising sin following Him, the holy and the true? But what says the mother of Samuel? "The wicked shall be silent in darkness." And how terrible that silent darkness of never ending despair. Is it then that some have more strength to endure than others? No, "For by strength shall no man prevail." No, the deeply important question is this, Are you one of His saints, one of His *holy* ones? If so, He has strength to keep your feet. And His love is as great as His power.

It is remarkable how these three chapters (1 Sam. i, ii, iii.) answer to the restored truth of saints gathered to Christ, like the restoration of Shiloh. So these words of Hannah as wonderfully illustrate the *order* of the truth restored. The beggars of the dung-hill lifted up to the throne of glory, come in verse 8, before the time of tribulation on the adversaries in verse 10. And then, in the same verse, the judgment of the ends of the earth, and then the reign of the King.

This, as the reader will see, answers to the order of the New Testament revelations:

1st. The grace of God taking out the vilest sinners, to take them, the church, to the throne of glory.

2nd. The absolute security of all who are the Lord's saints on earth.

3rd. The time of tribulation after the church is taken to glory.

4th. The coming of Christ to judge the quick, and set up His kingdom on earth.

How far Hannah may have entered into these things, or understood them, is not for us to say. This is what the Spirit saith by Peter, "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Peter i. 12.)

All this flowing through Hannah (grace and mercy) has much to do with forming the character of the pattern of the man, who desires to answer to the heart of Christ now, as set forth in His address to Philadelphia.

We will next turn to the deeply instructive principles set forth in the history of our Samuel; and then to the proofs that he was of the family of Korah, and its cheering lessons.

Can we shut our eyes to the fact, that we find Christendom, now at this very time, answering, in the most striking way, to the history and state of Israel in these days of Samuel. And more, just as the only true place chosen of Jehovah for Israel to gather to Him, so remarkably revived, or became again after centuries so prominent in 1 Samuel i. ii. iii.; so now, after

centuries, the *true* and *only* place which God has chosen for His saints to be gathered to, has been revived, or become the only place of safety and real communion with Himself in this very century. We have not the least doubt these chapters were written for our instruction.

Yes, in the midst of all the unrest and ever increasing wickedness, there is still the calm unspeakable peace of His presence wherever two or three are gathered to His blessed name. But mark, this cannot be known, or even understood, where officialism has its sway. This is most strikingly illustrated in chapter ii. The weaned child is in perfect peace. "The child did minister unto the Lord." How blessed is such employ. What a holy privilege to know His will, and have nothing in this world to do, yea, nothing in His presence, gathered to Himself, to do, but to do His will, to minister unto Him.

Not so the official family. "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord." (Ver. 12.) It is just so now. The greater the official dignity, the less may the Lord be known. We may seek the interest of sect or party; or, as in the case of the sons of Eli, seek how much we can get up by the flesh hook of three teeth, from the pan, the kettle, the caldron, or the pot: self, self, self. Was there any wickedness in Israel to equal the sins of these sons of the priest, at the very place where Jehovah had placed His holy name? And who are bringing in this down-grade, as it is called, this flood of blasphemies? Who are the "False teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift

destruction?" Who are undermining and seeking to destroy the word of God? Who are seeking to set aside God by the horrible and insane doctrine of evolution? Who are setting aside the divinity, the deity, and the atoning work of the Son of God? Is it not the official family, the sons of Eli? Is it not the family of the humanly ordained ministry?—each man with the "hook of three teeth in his hand"?

Is it not awful to contemplate, that the very men who are seeking to destroy Christianity, are deriving their rich supplies from its profession? All this is most strikingly foreshadowed in the life of Samuel, by the priests, the sons of Eli. We are deeply convinced, also, that those who will retain their official position and self-importance will fail to prove, or provide a remedy for, this state which marks the last days of this period of unbounded grace. If we would see the remedy we must turn to God, and see what He did with the *weaned child*. For then, as now, judgment and destruction was at the doors, and the sons of Eli knew it not.

The contrast to all this wickedness was very great in the weaned child. "But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover, his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year," &c. Oh, where is the little weaned child of this day, clothed with divine righteousness, and constantly renewed by grace and mercy with the little coat of practical righteousness? Happy contrast to the boasting official sons of Eli? Such as Samuel are they alone whom God will use.

Yes, the contrast is very sharp. These two

families illustrate two principles. We may say the principle of the weak and weaned Philadelphian, in Revelation iii., and the boasting Laodicean. These two principles are so opposite that they will not mingle. The first is well pleasing to the Lord; the other is professing Christendom, become so loathsome to Christ that He will utterly refuse it. (Rev. iii.)

Thus we get in Samuel the forecast of the days or century in which we live. But some will say, if a man keeps himself free from practising wickedness, it is no matter what he allows in others, with whom he may be associated. Does not the case of the aged Eli speak out here? He was very old, but his age was no proof that the Lord approved his ways. And mark, he knew of the evil of his sons and all they did. It was the practice of sin. Again, the Spirit points to the little weaned child. It is not to any dignitary of Israel. No, "And the child Samuel grew before the Lord." (Ver. 21.) And again, "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men." (Ver. 26.) This always marks the "little child" growth, in that hidden wisdom before the Lord. And still to grow on in the knowledge of infinite wisdom and love. Many have found unspeakable blessedness in this growth, of which the official must remain in complete ignorance, and through ignorance will treat it with contempt.

Will God never interfere with this state of things? Yes, He did then. "And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord." Read what the Lord says to Eli. (Vers. 27-36.) What was the chief

thing God had against the official Eli? Was it not just this one thing, association with, and allowance of, the evil he condemned?

And has not God raised up very specially, in this century, a testimony to this very principle? And it is very remarkable that every official in Christendom that has received that testimony has had to give up his position, and become a weaned little child. The substance of this testimony is in verse 30, "*For them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.*" Oh, weighty words! Do we understand them? He says, "Where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst of them." Do we honour Him? Do we honour Him as if we saw Him? or do we despise Him, and send for a man to help us to decide a difficult case? Or do we propose a man to preside over such a meeting, and the Lord present? Did John propose that Peter should preside at the last paschal feast? Is Christ not despised? The reader will here observe that official appointment of a man must dishonour and despise the Lord, in many cases most ignorantly, no doubt.

This is the question of to-day that must be faced by all the children of God. We would press the question, Do we honour the Lord as if we saw Him in our midst? It is the most grave question for those who profess to be gathered to His name, because He says, "There am I." Let us not forget such scriptures as 1 Corinthians xii. 4-8; xiv. 29-33.

To others we would also ask, Is it possible to honour the Lord, and set aside these inspired words for our guidance? And we must acknow-

ledge that an ordained minister to preside over an assembly, must, of necessity, set aside these scriptures; and instead of honouring the Lord, sets Him aside. It is necessary to speak plain. The end of the age is upon us, just as the end of that which God had chosen to illustrate these days of the church was close upon them, in our history of Samuel. We shall, therefore, find much to help, both those professedly gathered to Christ, the true Shiloh, and also as to the camp of Christendom. Unsparring judgment was pronounced against the house of Eli, judgment that should sweep them from the earth.

Let us now turn to the child Samuel. Are we of that family, saved from going down into the pit—the very contrast of the house of Eli? “And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.” Now, if the precious words of Jesus to the assembly at Philadelphia be our copy, then this is our path; and may this be our spirit, as a child dependent on the Holy Ghost ministering unto the Lord; seeking to please Him, to serve acceptably in His sight. Blessed occupation! even before Eli. That is, before the official ministry of this day, that allows the evil which it, in word, condemns. Our path is to go on: all true service is unto the Lord. Yes, whether before those who say they are outside the camp, and allow links with false doctrine, or before those in the camp, with all its last-days evil. The path of the little child is very simple; but its responsibilities are very great in these days, as we shall soon see.

Another blessed mark of the child Samuel in

this day also, to such as walk with God, is this: “The word of the Lord was precious in those days.” If this is not the case with you and me, we are not walking with God. You may say, I belong to a society that numbers its thousands and thousands. We do not read that there were thousands of Enochs, before the flood, that walked with God. Is the word of the Lord precious to you? The more that blessed word is attacked, is it still the more precious to you?

Night came on, and now darkness, gross darkness, is settling on the earth. And darkness of infidelity is preferred to the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. And those who pretend to be the great lights of the church, are themselves darkness itself. What a picture of them was aged Eli. He lay down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see. Is it not so with official Christendom? Their eyes are dim, they cannot see. The Lord is speaking in His word now, but they cannot hear.

Mark what a solemn moment this was. It was “ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down.” (1 Sam. iii. 3.) Is it not so at this *moment*? Christendom is refusing the truth in the love of it. And will the Holy Ghost remain and shine for ever? No. Oh, what will be the end of the hosts of infidel ministers, denying the Lord that bought them, and Christendom that loves to have it so? Paul says, “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned [or judged] who

believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.)

Read also the testimony of the Holy Ghost in 2 Peter ii. 1-3. But who hath an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto the assembly? Eli had no ear to hear then. The Eli's now have no ear to hear. Indeed, the Lord did not speak to Eli. He called the *child*. He spake to the child. It is remarkable: "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him." (Ver. 7.) We might easily understand that the sons of Eli knew not the Lord. But what does this mean, that Samuel, the weaned child, did not yet know the Lord?

Is it not that we may know Him as Saviour, long before we know Him as Lord; and as the Lord, speaking to us individually? In our own case it was so; and we believe there are many who have never known Him in that intimacy, so as to have actual communications from Him, and with Him. Where human arrangement has excluded the guidance of the Spirit, this is not to be expected. But even where there is the professed position of being gathered to Christ, this lesson of Samuel the child, and Eli the aged, demands our prayerful consideration. Did the Lord ever thus speak to you? He did speak to the child. Let us carefully consider the message.

The terrible judgment on the house of Eli is announced to the child. "And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. . . . For I have told him that

I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." (1 Sam. iii. 11-13.) And still further, mark these most solemn words: "And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever." (Ver. 14.) Can anything be more striking than the judgment of God on this principle, made so light of by men? the allowance of evil, even though you may be personally free from that evil; yet, if you are associated with those that practise sin, or hold false doctrine, you are clearly held as guilty of the very evil yourself. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." "If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified [or separated], and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." "From such turn away." (Read Rev. xviii. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 21, iii. 5.)

These scriptures cannot be ignored with impunity. The iniquity of Eli's house should not be purged with sacrifice or offering for ever. Yet this is the very principle defended by so many, who even profess to be gathered to Christ. Just as the house of Eli was, at the only place where the Lord had set His name. Nothing so hateful to them as holy separation from every link with false doctrine as to Christ. We cannot but dwell on this as a truth of the utmost importance. The judgment fell upon Shiloh for this very thing.

And the little child must tell Eli every whit.

"And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him." However painful, the full truth must be told out. Mark, this was the only fault of Eli. "And he said, it is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." (Ver. 18.) Now mark, if we are gathered to Christ, and in the little child spirit, there will be growth. "And Samuel grew." How oft this is repeated. And more, "And the Lord was with him." And have we not also seen the opposite? Those who do not in heart know the Lord do not grow. There is no spiritual advance in divine truth. There may be great excitement and activity, but the Lord is not *with them*. I have often said, If there be five meetings in a town, and only one truly gathered to the Lord, in heart owning and honouring His presence, growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord; and if a humble little Samuel was taken blindfold into each, he would have no difficulty in discerning where the Lord was truly present. His presence is so different from every imitation. I am persuaded many have never known it in reality. But that does not alter the fact, "And the Lord was with him."

Another mark of the Lord's approval was this: "And did let none of his words fall to the ground." All knew the Lord was speaking by Samuel. It will be so now, just as we are little, and weakness itself. God will use His servants, and their words shall now be heard, far beyond Dan to Beer-sheba.

If we compare this with Revelation iii., the address to Philadelphia, nothing could be more striking. There it is the blessed Lord Himself; what He is to those who have little strength.

It is just the same here in our Samuel. It is the Lord, the true Shiloh, at Shiloh, "For the Lord revealed himself to Samuel, in Shiloh, by the word of the Lord. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel." And this is the case now. Yes, and it will be until we see His face, who whispers, "I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Yes, blessed Lord, in the midst of all the tossings of these last of the last days, this is the holy peaceful retreat of safety, and the only one. Thou still revealest Thyself in the midst of the two or three gathered to Thy name. Yes, it is what Thou art to them. As thou didst weep over Jerusalem, well may we weep now. How few will allow Thee to gather them under the shelter of Thy presence. Well, soon the whole flock shall hear Thy voice, and rise to meet Thee in the air.

No doubt the greatest hindrance in this day is the house of Eli. How many sheep have they met and hindered when seeking the shelter of that place where He reveals Himself. And not they alone. How many an aged saint, who may have been for long years in the place, but never in the state of Samuel; and may never have really owned Christ in the midst. We find it so to our sorrow. But is this a reason why we should give it up? Well might we say, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

In 1 Samuel iv. 1 we come to an entire change. Samuel is *ignored*, as it were, by Israel for more than twenty years! Whatever he may have done, or however he may have walked with God, or God may have spoken by him, we hear nothing of

him for those years. For some time it has now been the same. There might not be a little company of believers truly gathered to the Lord on this earth, for anything you would find of them in the religious papers or literature of this day. Not even where their words are copied most. Let us look at these twenty years, and see if they throw any light on the days in which we live.

"Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer, and the Philistines pitched in Aphek." (1 Sam. iv. 1.) The very names of the places have a voice. The children of Israel pitch in Eben-ezer, "Stone of help," and the Philistines pitch in Aphek, "Strength, vigour." The Israelites are linked with the house of Eli, with allowed evil, and yet count on help, from whom?

Now whom do the Philistines illustrate in this day? They are in the land. It is not the power of Babylon, nor yet of Egypt, the world. They are like those who are in the professing church, get their living there, but are not of the church of God; if we may so say, not of the Israel of God. This vast army is divided into two immense wings. Just as the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel, so now. The right wing, like a dark cloud, Romish idolatry, is steadily advancing; the Ritual Clergy, no small skirmishing party, everywhere going before. The left wing, a black host of bold blasphemy and cruel infidelity. Their skirmishers, the infidel clergy, ever helping and covering the black mass behind. Such is the army of the modern Philistines, set in deadly array.

You notice, in this case, the children of Israel

go out first against them, *linked as they are with the house of Eli*. Samuel, for the present, is out of sight. And who are the Israel, or who compose the army that is going out to confront the modern hosts of the Lords of Philistia? I think we may fairly take evangelical Christendom, as shewn often on parade in Exeter Hall. Only observe, all that seek to tread in the steps of Samuel, at Shiloh, are out of sight—I trust many in prayer.

Dear brethren, take warning. "And when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines." No one acquainted with the sword and its use, even the word of God, can help feeling it is handled feebly, and a trained ear would say, The trumpet, on most important foundation truth, gives an uncertain sound. Samuel would take no part there. We shall see him, and hear his words by-and-by.

Verse 3. The elders of Israel are greatly perplexed. They ask, "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day, before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." There is no real humiliation before the Lord. No real looking to the Lord. They fetch the symbol of His presence from its true place, as they say "to us;" and it is that "it" may save them. And who were with the symbol. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas! Can the Lord associate His holy presence with allowed wickedness? Impossible. Oh, beloved children of God, this is the solemn question for our souls just now. We are all poor failing worms, but what is the remedy? "If

we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." But can He be with us if we allow wickedness? This question must come to the front. Is it not most true, and sad, that men's abject regard for, and fear of, the priesthood (even the false one, assumed through the history of Christianity), has made them allow every wickedness under the sun? All this pleased deceived Israel well. "And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." This is man. It may be seen, at times, in Exeter Hall, when thousands stand up, and wave handkerchiefs in wild acclamation. But is this the Spirit of God?

This outburst of enthusiasm may make the Philistines, when they hear the shout, say, "What meaneth the noise of this great shout?" And, for the moment, they were afraid. They said, "God is come into the camp; and they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore." But they quickly arouse themselves, and say, "Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Quit yourselves like men, and fight." But it may be said by those who now desire to make a bold stand against the infidel ministers in Christendom, We have not served them. Have you not? Have you not long known that they were infidels, fattening on the land amongst you, paid to preach the gospel, which they sought to destroy? Is not professing Christendom serving these modern Philistines? This present struggle will be no light matter. It will be found that

the clergy will not be able to meet it. The waving of handkerchiefs, and making of speeches of uncertain sound, yea, shouting until the earth is made to ring with the noise, will not win the battle.

"And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled, every man, into his tent; and there was a very great slaughter." And, still worse, "The ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain." Thus judgment fell upon the house of Eli. Poor Eli, his heart trembled for the ark of God. And the news came to the fine old man, whose eyes were dim that he could not see. He bore the news of the death of his wicked sons; but when the messenger made mention of the ark of God, "he fell from off his seat backward, by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died." Where now is the shout of that great noise? Is it a light thing to reject the word of the Lord, and remain linked with evil? Remember, to receive one into your house, or even to salute him who brings false doctrine, or goes on in evolution or development, beyond the word of God, is to be a partaker of his evil deeds. (2 John 10, 11.) Ichabod will as surely be written on Christendom, as it was on the house of Eli, at Shiloh. "And she said, the glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken."

How deeply solemn is all this, after all the boasting and the shouting! Death and judgment are written on the whole scene. But, assuredly, the type cannot exceed the antitype. What will be the end of boasting Christendom? He, who knows, says, "I know thy works, that thou

art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich," &c. (Rev. iii. 14-18.) The end of Christendom.

Rude Philistine hands were laid on the ark of God; and the Philistines took the ark. They bring it first to Ashdod, "a wild, open place, pillage, theft." Rude Socialist infidel hands may be laid on the word of holy scripture, where God is revealed. It may be taken in triumph to adorn the temple of wild, red, robbing, latter-day blasphemous infidelity. But God can deal with such as He dealt with the men of Ashdod. It may then be sent to Gath, "wine-press." Yes, that holy word may be made the song of the drunkard. Then it was sent to Ekron, "barrenness, torn away." Yes, it may be sent to the poor know-nothings in their terrible barren land. But the hand of God is on every city that dares to profane the ark. Oh, ye infidels of this apostate Christendom, remember God is God. He can give you trouble and judgment in the deep secret of your minds and consciences, far worse than the emerods of the Philistines, for seven months. The ark is never brought back to Shiloh, the place which the Lord did choose. Terrible judgment also fell upon the men of Beth-shemesh, "The house of the sun; or the house of service, or ministry," because they looked into the ark. Yes, the house of the sun, or Baal worshippers, the ministry of idolatry, will surely be judged, though they be reckoned of Christianity, for all their prying, dissecting, reasoning on the word of God. Such,

then, is the end of the principles of the house of Eli.

My reader may say, I am a wanderer. Long have I mourned for real communion with the Lord. The history and principles of the house of Eli do not help me; what will help, truly help the children of God? Thankful am I to say that is our next subject.

"And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim ['a city of woods'], that the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." Oh, how many dwell there, just like men lost in interminable woods. They come to lanes, and crossings, but do not know which is right. Reader, do you dwell in the woods of religious confusion? Do you say, I mourn to know with certainty, the way of the Lord? Do you long to return to the Lord? Are you quite sure the ways of the house of Eli will not lead you there? Cannot the clergy lead you there? No. One says, This is the way, and another says, It is not. Can you shew me the right way? Thank God, we have it here before us. Let us now return, after twenty years, to the ways of the little child, grown up a man of God, in secret. (See 1 Sam. vii.)

"And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying"—and thus would we speak to the whole church of God: "If ye do return unto the Lord, with all your hearts." Let us weigh every word. It is not, If ye return, or come to some sect, or party, or church government, or to Shiloh as a place. No, we must return from every sect, and from every man that takes the

place of Christ; not in outward form merely, but unto the Lord, with all our hearts. It must be to Himself, all else is worth nothing. And what more? "Then put away the strange gods, and Ashtaroth, from among you." Everything of heathenism; and, oh, how much has been introduced, and mingled with Christianity. All must be given up. "And prepare your hearts, and *serve him only.*"

All this is intensely practical. If you are a true believer, born of God, nothing can satisfy Him, who died for you, but your heart. To *serve Him only.* This cannot be if you are connected with that which He condemns. How can you serve Him only, if you are serving a sect which He condemns? Surely we should seek to do His will, as He delighted to do the Father's will that sent Him. Will you think of those words, "serve him only." Lord, engrave them on our hearts.

"And he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines." How simple! How sure! Many have proved its truth. To do this we must come out of the camp to Him, to *serve Him only.* There is no other way of escape from the woods of perplexity, and from the hosts of Philistines, led on by Satan and his myriad demon hosts.

Are you weary in the woods? Jesus says, "Come unto me and rest." But there must be the hearty giving up of whatever is inconsistent with serving Him alone. And mere talk will not do. "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only." Such is the effect of true ministry. The ministry of the little child. What is so sad

in this day is: Ministry still leaves souls mixed up with the world. Yes, mixed up with much that has come from Baal worship, and not from the word of God. What have you put away to serve the Lord only?

If we pursue this important chapter, we shall find the exact opposite to the effect of association with the house and sons of Eli, as seen in chapter iv. Samuel gathers all Israel together for prayer, not for shouting. He says, "I will pray for you unto the Lord." It is not looking to the ark now, that *it* may save them, but to the Lord Himself. Yes, in the one case it was enthusiasm and shouting, until the earth rang, but linked with the evil allowed in the house of Eli. In the other, "They gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord." (Ver. 6.) Yes, Israel shouted until the earth rang. And when the thousands rose from their seats, they clapped hands, they waved handkerchiefs, they applauded in the fullest enthusiasm, until the place rang again. But if we are led into the very presence of the Lord, we shall be as water spilt on the ground. Beautiful figure of our true place at such a time as this. With the sins of Eli, Israel allowed the most fearful wickedness. With Samuel they fast, and confess their sins. To which of these companies do you belong, reader? There was no victory with identification with evil, but the most fearful discomfiture.

The Philistines heard of all this, and how the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh; and the proud lords of the Philistines

went up against Israel. Yes, there is one thing the modern lords of the Philistines cannot endure. They abhor the principle first seen in the church at the beginning, that Christians, as such, should be gathered together to Christ alone. What would be the case if, as all Israel then, all the sheep of Christ were to give up their own folds, and be gathered together to Christ? No doubt the Philistines, the whole apostate professing Christendom, would come up against them. This would be the so-called sect everywhere spoken against. This was not child's play. The children of Israel were afraid of the Philistines. No shouting now, but they said to Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that HE will save us out of the hand of the Philistines." And what did Samuel do in this supreme moment of danger? He "took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord; and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him." It is written of those taken up to heaven, who are there when Satan is let loose on the dwellers on earth, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death," &c. (Rev. xii. 10-12.) This only ground of victory was thus shadowed forth by Samuel. Did not that offered lamb remind them of redemption from Egypt by the blood of the lamb? Their redemption was but a figure of ours. But they were redeemed by the blood of the lamb, brought out of one place, under Pharaoh, into another, to serve the Lord only.

Perhaps there is nothing so little understood in

this day as redemption. Do we know that we have eternal redemption through the blood of God's Lamb? Not man's lamb, God's Lamb. "God will provide himself a lamb," said Abraham. God has provided Himself a Lamb. God is satisfied with the value of the blood of redemption. He needs no other. Is this the ground you stand on? Not on your condition improved a little, as a slave in Egypt; but redeemed to God for all eternity? Nothing to mere human reason could have looked more absurd. The proud lords of the Philistines advance with their serried ranks, as Samuel offers the lamb for a burnt offering. The burnt offering shews also how God sees us in all the perfections and sweet savour of Christ. There the soul can rest in all the unclouded favour and love of God, our Father. Oh, that every child of God knew this, his happy place, brought into favour *in* the Beloved. As to themselves, Israel does not give one shout now. Indeed, as to any strength of their own, they are afraid. They look only to God as the lamb is offered. Are they now overcome and smitten again, as the eye rests on the lamb, and the heart goes up to God? As linked once with the house and sins of the house of Eli, *they shouted*; but now "the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel." They were utterly subdued. Such is ever the path of faith. The type of the church, as shadowed forth in Shiloh and Samuel, may be said to close here. Beginning with redemption from Egypt, as pointed out in the tract, "From Egypt to Shiloh," these remarks

may be read as a sequel to that tract. Indeed, they would scarcely be understood without first reading that.

What follows in the book of Samuel illustrates the principles of the kingdom of God yet to be set up in heaven and on earth.

There is one subject we would look at a little before we close. We noticed that Samuel was of the family of Korah, which was spared, in pure sovereign grace, from going down into the pit. A short genealogy of Samuel is given, as the son of "Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph." (1 Sam. i. 1.) If we compare this with 1 Chronicles vi. 22-28, there we have the genealogy traced down from Korah to Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, and to Samuel and his sons Vashni (called also Joel) and Abiah. Grace shines out in the history of Samuel from first to last. In 1 Samuel viii. 1, we read, "When Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel or (Vashni), and the name of his second, Abiah. . . . And his sons walked not in his ways, they turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment." Such is man.

In Chronicles we look forward beyond this scene, to the kingdom and the glory. "And *these* are they whom David set over the service of song, in the house of the Lord, after the ark had rest, &c. . . . And these are they that waited with their children: Of the sons of the Kohathites; HEMAN, a singer, the son of Joel (or Vashni), the son of Shemuel (Samuel), the son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham." And the genealogy is now traced downwards to Korah. Yes,

the highly privileged Heman, the leader of the songs of the Lord, was grandson to Samuel. And we may read further of Heman and his brethren in 1 Chronicles xxv., how David separated them to this happy service of praise, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthan. Here we read how they prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the Lord. (Verses 2, 3.) And now are recounted the names of the great-grandsons of Samuel: "And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters." (Ver. 5.) "ALL these were under the hands of their Father for song, in the house of God, according to the King's order to Asaph, Jeduthan, and Heman." The number of them is given in twice 144, that were instructed in the songs of the Lord. (Ver. 7.) Now of the sons of Heman, the grandson of Samuel, you will count sixteen, and each of their families counted twelve—or, in all, of this highest honoured family of praise, out of 288, there are 192 of the family of Samuel, of the family of Korah, saved from going down into the pit. (Num. xvi. and xxvi. 9-11.)

Such is the history of Samuel, the child, the son of Hannah ("grace and mercy") and Elkanah ("God hath redeemed"). From first to last, all is free grace, depths of mercy. Blessed figure, too, of that redemption which is wholly of God. This is but a feeble outline, but how full of instruction to us at this very moment.

Who has not felt the peculiar sweetness of the songs, in the book-psalms of the sons of Korah, the family of the little weaned child Samuel, saved from going down to the pit? We might dwell with rapture on Psalms xliv., xlv., xlvi.,

xlvii., and, indeed, all the songs of the sons of the family of Samuel. And we feel sure, if we read them, expressing the joy of those saved from going down to the pit, they will speak to our hearts of the ineffable delight that awaits those now saved from going down alive into the pit. Yes, though the bodies of the rich man, and the very poor beggar, were dead and buried, yet they lived in all the realities of paradise, or unending torment. Yes, he was alive in the pit. Fellow believer, let us never forget we are like the sons of Korah. We have actually been saved from going down to the pit. You and I, but for grace, might have been there.

When the ark had entered its rest, then sang the sons of Samuel, chief singers in the service of holy song. Soon the church will have entered into its rest, and seated around the throne, in the high kingdom of God. As surely as the days of Saul came to an end, so surely shall the days of the wicked one, the man of sin, come to an end. And as surely as the failing kingdom of David and Solomon was set up, so surely shall the kingdom of the unfailing Holy, Holy, Holy One be set up. "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the THRONE, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures, and four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers

of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God," &c. (Rev. v.)

A greater than David, a greater than Solomon, shall sit on the throne. The only worthy One. The very Lamb of God, blasphemed now here below, and kissed by those who pretend to be His ministers. There was but one Judas in the upper room, but now their name is legion.

"But there the whole triumphant throng
Of blood bought saints on high,
Shall sing the new eternal song,
With Jesus ever nigh."

Only one more word, WILL YOU BE THERE?

C. S.

