**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**DEUTERONOMY-009. THEIR ROCK AND OUR ROCK by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being Judges."*

*Deuteronomy 32:31*

Moses is about to leave the people whom he had led so long, and his last words are words of solemn warning. He exhorts them to cleave to God. The words of the text simply mean that the history of the nation had sufficiently proved that God, their God, was above all gods. The Canaanites and all the enemies whom Israel had fought had been beaten, and in their awe of this warrior people acknowledged that their idols had found their lord. The great suit of Jehovah versus Idols has long since been decided. Every one acknowledges that Christianity is the only religion possible for twentieth century men. But the words of the text lend themselves to a wider application, and clothe in a picturesque garb the universal truth that the experience of godless men proves the futility of their objects of trust, when compared with that of him whose refuge is in God.

**I. God is a Rock to them that trust Him.**

We note the singular frequency of that designation in this song, in which it occurs six times. It is also found often in the Psalms. If Moses were the singer, we might see in this often-repeated metaphor a trace of influence of the scenery of the Sinaitic peninsula, which would he doubly striking to eyes accustomed to the alluvial plains of Egypt. What are the aspects of the divine nature set forth by this name?

**(a)** Firm foundation: the solid eternity of the rock on which we can build. Petra: faithfulness to promises, unchanging.

**(b)** Refuge: refuge from the storm; my rock and my fortress and my high tower.

**(c)** Refreshment: rock from which water gushed out; and (4) Repose: shadow of a great rock; shadow from the heat.

Trace the image through Scripture, from this song till Christ's parable of the man who built his house on a rock.

**II. Every man's experience shows him that there is no such refuge anywhere else.**

We do not assert that every man consciously comes to that conclusion. All we say is that he would do so if he rightly pondered the facts. The history of every life is a history of disappointment. Take these particulars just stated and ask yourselves: What does experience say as to the possibility of our possessing such blessings apart from God? There is no need for us to exaggerate, for the naked reality is sad enough. If God is not our best Good, we have no solid good. Every other rock crumbles into sand. Else why this restless change, why this disquiet, why the constant repetition, generation after generation, of the old, old wail, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity? Why does every heart say Amen to the poet and the dramatist singing of the fever and the fret, the tragic fare of man's life?

Our appeal is not to men in the flush of excitement, but to them in their hours of solitary sane reflection. It is from Philip drunk to Philip sober. We each have material for judging in our own case, and in the cases of some others. The experiment of living with other rocks than God has been tried for millenniums now. What has been the issue? You know what Christianity claims that it can do to make a life stable and safe. Do you know anything else that can? You know what Christian men will calmly say that they have found. Can you say as much? Let us hear some dying testimonies. Hearken to Jacob: The God which hath fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil. Hearken to Moses: The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are judgment, a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He. Hearken to Joshua: Not one good thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake. Hearken to David: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want .... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. Hearken to Paul: The Lord stood by me and strengthened me, and I was delivered ... the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom. What man who has chosen to take refuge or build on men and creatures can look backward and forward in such fashion?

**III. Every man's own nature tells him that God is his true Rock.**

Again I say that here I do not appeal to the surface of our consciousness, nor to men who have sophisticated themselves, nor to people who have sinned themselves, into hardness, but to the voice of the inner man which speaks in the depths of each man's being.

* There is the cry of Want: the manifest want of the soul for God.
* There is the voice of Reason.
* There is the voice of Conscience.

**IV. Yet many of us will not take God for our Rock.**

Surely it is a most extraordinary thing that men should be judges, being convinced in their deepest consciousness that God is the only Foundation and Refuge, and yet that the conviction should have absolutely no influence on their conduct. The same stark, staring inconsequence is visible in many other departments of life, but in this region it works its most tragic results. The message which many of my hearers need most is--follow out your deepest convictions, and be true to the inward voice which condenses all your experience into the one counsel to take God for the strength of your hearts and your portion for ever, for only in Him will you find what you need for life and strength and riches. If He is our Rock, then we shall have a firm foundation, a safe refuge, inexhaustible refreshment and untroubled rest. Lives founded on aught beside are built on sand and will be full of tremors and unsettlements, and at last the despairing builder and his ruined house will be washed away with the dissolving sandbank and shoal of time on which he built.