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

**ISAIAH-004. THE PERPETUAL PILLAR OF CLOUD AND FIRE by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"And the Lord will create over the whole habitation of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night."*

*Isaiah 4:5*

The pillar of cloud and fire in the Exodus was one: there are to be as many pillars as there are assemblies in the new era. Is it straining the language too much to find significance in that difference? Instead of the formal unity of the Old Covenant, there is a variety which yet is a more vital unity. Is there not a hint here of the same lesson that is taught by the change of the one golden lamp-stand into the seven, which are a better unity because Jesus Christ walks among them?

The heart of this promise, thus cast into the form of ancient experiences, but with significant variations, is that of true communion with God.

That communion makes those who have it glorious.

That communion supplies unfailing guidance.

A man in close fellowship with God will have wonderful flashes of sagacity, even about small practical matters. The gleam of the pillar will illumine conscience, and shine on many difficult, dark places. The simplicity of a saintly soul will often see deeper into puzzling contingencies than the vulpine craftiness of the prudent. The darker the night, the brighter the guidance.

That communion gives a defence.

The pillar came between Egypt and Israel, and kept the foe off the timid crowd of slaves. Whatever forms our enemies take, fellowship with God will invest us with a defence as protean as our perils. The same cloud is represented in the context as being a pavilion for a shadow in the heat, and for a refuge and for a covert from storm and from rain.