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

**JEREMIAH-016. WHAT THE STABLE CREATION TEACHES by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever."*

*Jeremiah 31:36*

This is the seal of the new covenant, which is to be made in days future to the prophet and his contemporaries, with the house of Israel and of Judah. That new covenant is referred to in Hebrews as the fundamental law of Christ's kingdom. Therefore we have the right to take to ourselves the promises which it contains, and to think of the house of Israel and the seed of Jacob as including us, though Abraham be ignorant of us.

The covenant and its pledge are equally grand. The very idea of a covenant as applied to God is wonderful. It is meant to teach us that, from all the infinite modes of action possible to Him, He has chosen One; that He has, as it were, marked out a path for Himself, and confined the freedom of His will and the manifold omnipotences of His power to prescribed limits, that He has determined the course of His future action. It is meant to teach us, too, the other grand thought that He has declared to us what that course is, not leaving us to learn it piecemeal by slow building up of conclusions about His mind from His actions as they come forth, but inversely telling us His mind and purpose in articulate and authentic words by which we are to interpret each successive work of His. He makes known His purposes. Before they spring forth I tell you of them.

It is meant to teach us, too, that He regards Himself as bound by the declaration which He has made, so that we may rest secure on this strong foundation of His faithfulness and His truth, and for all doubts and fears find the sufficient cure in His own declaration: My covenant will I not break nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. No wonder that the dying king found the strength of his failing heart in the thought, He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.

The weighty promises of this solemn bond of God's cover the whole ground of our spiritual necessities--forgiveness of sins, true, personal, direct acquaintance with God, an intercommunion of mutual possession between Him who is ours and us who are His, and an inward sanctification by which His precepts shall coincide with our desires. These are the blessings which He binds Himself to bestow.

And of this transcendent pact, the seal and guarantee is worthy. God descends to ratify a bond with man. By it He binds Himself to give all possible good for the soul. And to confirm it heaven and earth are called in. He points us to all that is august, stable, immense, inscrutable in the works of His hands, and bids us see there His pledge that He will be a faithful, covenant-keeping God. Sun, moon and stars, heaven, earth and sea--ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord.

God's unchangeable love is the true lesson from the stable regularity of the universe. The tone in which Scripture speaks of external nature in all its parts is very remarkable, altogether peculiar. It does not take the aesthetic or the scientific, but the purely religious point of view.

**I. The facts. All nature is directly the effect of God's will and power. He giveth, He divideth (v. 35).**

The physical universe presents a spectacle of stable regularity.

This regularity is the consequence of sovereign, divine will. These ordinances are not laws of nature, but of God.

**II. The use commonly made of the facts.**

Ordinary unthinking worldliness sees nothing noticeable in them because they come uniformly. Earthquakes startle, but the firmness of the solid earth attracts no observation. God is thought to speak in the extraordinary, but most men do not hear His voice in the normal.

Scientific godlessness formularises this tendency into a system, and proclaims that laws are everything and God a mere algebraical 'x'.

**III. The lesson which they are meant to teach.**

God's works are a revelation of God.

There is nothing in effect which is not in cause, and the stability of these ordinances carries our thoughts back to an unchanging Ordainer.

They witness to His constancy of purpose or will. His acts do not come from caprice, nor are done as experiments, but are the stable expression of uniform and unchanging will.

They witness to His unfailing energy of power, which operates unspent and is to-day as fresh as at creation's birth.

They witness to a single end pursued through all changes, and by all varieties of means. Darkness and light, sun rising and setting, storm and sunshine, summer and winter, all serve one end. As a horizontal thrust may give rise to opposite circular motions which all issue in working out an onward progress, so the various dealings of Providence with us are all adapted to work together, and that for good.

They witness that life, joy, beauty, flow from obedience.

Thus, then, these ordinances in their stability are witnesses. But they are inferior witnesses. The noblest revelation of the divine faithfulness and unchangeable purpose of good is in Jesus. And these witnesses will one day pass. Even now they have their changes, slow and unmarked by a short-lived man. Stars burn out, there have been violent convulsions, shocks and shatterings in the heavens, and a time comes, as even physical science predicts, when the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, but that to which they witnessed shall endure, My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished. The created lights grow dim and die out, but in the Father of lights is no variableness, neither shadow that is cast by turning.

Hence we see what our confidence should be. It should stand firm and changeless as the Covenant, and we should move in our orbits as the stars and hearken to the voice of His word as do they. Let us see to it that we have faith to match His faithfulness, and that our confidence shall be firmer than the mountains, more stable than the stars.