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

**JOSHUA-011. UNWON BUT CLAIMED by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed, ... them will I drive out from before the children of Israel; only divide thou it by lot unto Israel for an inheritance."*

*Joshua 7:1,6*

Joshua was now a very old man and had occupied seven years in the conquest. His work was over, and now he had only to take steps to secure the completion by others of the triumph which he would never see. This incident has many applications to the work of the Church in the world, but not less important ones to individual progress, and we consider these mainly now.

**I. The clear recognition of present imperfection.**

That is essential in all regions, Not as though; the higher up, the more clearly we see the summit. The ideal grows loftier, as partially realised. The mountain seems comparatively low and easy till we begin to climb. We should be continually driven by a sense of our incompleteness, and drawn by the fair vision of unattained possibilities. In all regions, to be satisfied with the attained is to cease to grow.

This is eminently so in the Christian life, with its goal of absolute completeness.

How blessed this dissatisfaction is! It keeps life fresh: it is the secret of perpetual youth.

Joshua's work was incomplete, as every man's must be. We each have our limitations, the defects of our qualities, the barriers of our environment, the brevity of our day of toil, and we have to be content to carry the fiery cross a little way and then to give it up to other hands. There is only One who could say, It is done. Let us see that we do our own fragment.

**II. The confident reckoning on complete possession.**

Joshua's conquest was very partial. He subdued part of the central mountain nucleus, but the low-lying stretch of country on the coast, Philistia and the maritime plain up to Tyre and Sidon and other outlying districts, remained unsubdued. Yet the whole land was now to be allotted out to the tribes. That allotment must have strengthened faith in their ultimate possession, and encouraged effort to make the ideal a reality, and to appropriate as their own in fact what was already theirs in God's purpose. So a great part of Christian duty, and a great secret of Christian progress, is to familiarise ourselves with the hope of complete victory. We should acquire the habit of contemplating as certainly meant by God to be ours, complete conformity to Christ's character, complete appropriation of Christ's gifts. God bade Jeremiah buy a field that was in Anathoth at the time an invading army held the land. A Roman paid down money for the ground on which the besiegers of Rome were encamped. It does not become Christians to be less confident of victory. But we have to take heed that our confidence is grounded on the right foundation. God's commandment to Joshua to allot the land, even while the formidable foes enumerated in the context held it firmly, was based on the assurance (verse 6): Them will I drive out before the children of Israel. Confidence based on self is presumption, and will end in defeat; confidence based on God will brace to noble effort, which is all the more vigorous and will surely lead to victory, because it distrusts self.

**III. The vigorous effort animated by both the preceding.**

How the habit of thinking the unconquered land theirs would encourage Israel. Efforts without hope are feeble; hope without effort is fallacious.

Israel's history is significant. The land was never actually all conquered. God's promises are all conditional, and if we do not work, or if we work in any other spirit than in faith, we shall not win our allotted part in the inheritance of the saints in light. It is possible to lose thy crow. Work out your own salvation. Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land.