

Worship

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

VICTORY OVER THE MYSTIC BEAST.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 27TH, 1864, BY

MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

“Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”—Rev. xv. 3.

SOME have thought that the combination of the song of Moses and the Lamb refers to the providence and to the grace of God; to the providence of God as indicated by the song of Moses, and to the grace of God as indicated by the song of the Lamb. This is the view that some take, and there is nothing whatever unscriptural in such a view, but a great deal to our instruction and comfort from that view, for every Christian. We know that God, as a God of providence, is a wonder-working God; and if thou hast a praying heart under thy providential difficulties, though thy praying heart may at one and the same time be mingled with many rebellions and much fretfulness, yet the God of all can distinguish the sincere desires and groanings of thine heart from the sins and rebellions with which they are mixed. I do believe that I have had often in this sense some of the most conspicuous answers to prayer, when my prayers have been in great part mixed up with rebellion, infidelity, sin, and a temptation to curse God himself, to quarrel with him, asking why he deals in such a way as this? Yet, amidst all this, there is a sighing to him that he would arise, and that he would put forth his hand, and that he would bring matters into a more bearable form. And notwithstanding these sins and rebellions that are connected with many of the prayers of the saints, yet the Lord hears such. There never was but one that could pray under trouble without mingling any rebellion therewith. Even Elijah, we are given to understand, did not pray without infirmity; “Elias, a man of like passions with ourselves.” He entreated God in providential matters; it is true, those providential matters were connected with eternal things; and I ask, what providential circumstance in the history of the real Christian is not connected with eternal things? When the Christian has prosperity, he says, “This is that I may give more to the cause and to the people of God; that is why I have this prosperity.” If he hath adversity, the Christian says, “This is that I may learn what grace can do for me in that adversity, and how he can take away the violence of the fire, and how he can enable me to endure the trial; and when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold, and I shall behold his face in righteousness.” So that if we take the song of Moses in this light,—though I think that is not the meaning, still it is a thought that doth arise; there is a great deal of truth in it,—then we shall have much to bless the Lord for in his providential dealings with us; and in that respect each Christian will at the last say, “Now, though I once could not say it, though I once could not understand it, now I know that,—

“In all that me befell,
My Jesus hath done all things well.”

So, bless the Lord then, that we have a heart to pray, and confidence
VOL. VI.—No. 312.

in him, that confidence shall not be in vain; that prayer shall find an answer in the best possible way, namely, God's own way. The song of Moses, then, taken in that sense, is very beautiful; but I rather think the proper meaning, without excluding, or for one moment making light of the other thought, I think the proper meaning is that the deliverance the Lord wrought from Egypt (and that will come in part before us this morning; we shall have to refer rather largely to it), that the deliverance which the Lord wrought from Egypt, being a type of the eternal salvation of the souls of men, being a type of the salvation wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ, the one being a type of the other, on this account they are combined, and put together; the song of Moses in type, and the song of the Lamb in antitype; the one typifying the other. I need not remind you of the many scriptures that refer us back to the wonders the Lord wrought in Egypt, the wonders the Lord wrought in the wilderness, in bringing his people into the promised land; as so many representations of those dealings of the Lord with his people that shall bring them at last into that fulness of joy and those pleasures which are in his presence and at his right hand for evermore.

I shall notice our text under simply a twofold representation. Here is, first, *the distinction*,—the saints: and here is, secondly, *their testimony*; “Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”

First, then, we have to notice *the distinction*,—saints. The Lord help me, poor creature that I am, for a few moments to try to describe what a saint of God is. For you are well aware, in this deluded world, how many thousands are men-made saints, and how many are self-made saints, and how many are circumstantially made saints; but after all, if we are not saints of God, if we are saints only of men, then the Lord will not own the holiness by which we suppose we are saints, and he will not own the righteousness by which we suppose we are saints, and he will not own the religion by which we suppose we are saints. We all know that the Lord will despise our sins, we all know that; but then it is an awful thought that there are also religions which the Lord infinitely and eternally despises. I need not remind you of his woes against the Pharisees; I need not remind you of Satan being transformed as an angel of light. Let us then, the Lord helping us, look closely, this morning, into this matter, and then those of you that have any reason to believe that you are saints of God, you will take courage, and look to him; those of you that have no reason to believe that you are partakers of this great sanctification upon which I am about to speak, may the Lord open your eyes, and give you to see your destitution, and lead you to seek a knowledge of that by which alone you can be saved. Now, first, then, the general views taken are these, “Sanctified of God the Father,”—set apart by him; that is a doctrinal truth, and a blessed truth. “Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate;” another essential and blessed truth. “Sanctified by the Holy Ghost;” another essential and blessed truth. Yet it is not after this order, though scriptural, that I shall this morning describe the saint. I shall go to the circumstances referred to in this chapter; for this same chapter refers to the deliverance from Egypt. And the first step in sanctification there was this, they received the paschal lamb, and were consecrated to God by the paschal lamb, by the blood of the lamb; and being thus consecrated to God, they were all reckoned alike. Do not lose sight of this if you can help it, that all the Israelites, whatever their differences naturally, or whatever had been their differences morally, or whatever had been their differences circumstantially, they were all, as believers in and receivers of the spotless lamb, reckoned alike; they were all reckoned as free from fault, as holy unto God, and the angel passed by one just as freely as he did another; there was no difference. Now then, in order for you to be a saint of God, you must become a saint

of God as described in the 15th chapter of the Acts; "purifying their hearts by faith;" that is, you must be led to see and feel that you in yourself are nothing but a sinner; and that sin, if left with you, and laid to your account, must be the endless misery, the endless woe, the endless punishment, the endless damnation of your never-dying soul. And then you will see that if the blood of Jesus exempts you from the whole, frees you from the whole, pardons the whole, blots out the whole, puts away the whole, washes you clean from the whole,—“Come, let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though red like crimson, they shall be as wool;”—if thy soul lays hold of this Jesus Christ, then, by faith, not by the flesh, not by works, but by the fountain that is opened for sin and uncleanness, thy faith laying hold of this, thou art a saint; here thou art free from sin. As Hart saith, amidst the many other beautiful things he saith concerning the believer's prospect in this matter,—

“We'll tell the Father in that day,
And thou shalt witness what we say,—
We're clean, just God, we're clean.”

We can bear no other testimony; the word of God declares that “the blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanseth from all sin;” and my text says, “Just and true,” it's a matter of righteousness and of eternal truth. That is the first step towards becoming a saint. There is no reformation you can make that will make you a saint; it may help to prove you are one, but it cannot make you one. There is no prayer you can pray can make you a saint,—it may help to prove you are one; there is no repentance that you can have that can make you a saint,—it may help to prove you are one; there is no love you can have to God that can make you a saint,—it will help to prove you are a saint; there is no kindness you can show to the ministers of God, to the people of God, to the poor of God's people, or to the cause of God, that can make you a saint,—it may help to prove you are one, if you do these things from the motive of faith; for “whatsoever is not of faith is sin;” “without faith it is impossible to please God.” This is one step, then, towards being a saint. So the people were thus reckoned holy. “When I see the blood I will pass by.” Here the Father smiles, and smiles for ever. And what is the Holy Spirit after this order of things—what is he? He is a dove. Is there anything terrific in a dove? Is there anything repulsive or offensive in the beautiful dove? “Descended upon him in bodily shape like a dove.” The peaceful dove, the heavenly dove. We all like those hymns where our brethren gifted to make good spiritual hymns have made use of this simile of the heavenly dove to set forth the peaceful character of the Holy Spirit of the blessed God. And what is Jesus Christ in this matter? Meek and lowly in heart. And what is God the Father here? Why, loving with all his heart: pitying as a father; he is simply a father, and he holds his people as his children. “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more your heavenly Father!” Why, all is tranquil, all is peaceful here. Ah, when thou canst enter into the realization of this saintship, this blessedness and consecration to God, then thou wilt perceive the noise of thy sins, and of the world, and of adversaries, no more than you can hear a shaking leaf when rattling thunders round you roar. Oh, there is something divine, there is something vital, there is something godlike, there is something eternal, something triumphant, something wonderful, in thus being a saint of God; made holy by the great God, cleansed from sin by the great Mediator of the everlasting covenant, quickened by the eternal Spirit, and brought into this vital oneness with the dear Lamb of God. These are saints, then; that is step the first. Step the second in this saintship is that of immersion into the truth of God. “I would not have you ignorant, brethren, how that our fathers were under the cloud, and were baptized

unto Moses in the cloud." They were immersed in the light of this cloud; and this cloud, that severed them from and defended them from the Egyptians; this cloud, in which the great God dwelt; this cloud, that lighted up their path; this cloud, that guided them through the devious desert; this cloud, that indicated the presence of God, is a type of the truth of God. 17th of John, "Sanctify them through thy truth." And now this cloud severed them from the Egyptians. And now just watch me very narrowly in what I am going to say. 17th of John. This cloud I take to be a type of the gospel of Christ. God was in the cloud, and God is in the truth; and Christ was in the cloud, and Christ is in the truth. And this cloud severed them from the Egyptians, and they were as dead to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians dead to them, and they came not near each other all night. Now, then, mark the Saviour's words; he, concerning his disciples, saith, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them." Mark that! as soon as ever a man receives God's eternal truth, the world will begin to hate him directly; they will begin to sneer directly. So you are become one of the hypers, are you? You are become one of the high doctrine, are you? You are become one of the bigoted, are you? You are become one of the narrow-minded, are you? "I have given them thy word;" and then his next words are, "and the world hath hated them." "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We live in a day when a little decent profession would rather make the world love you than hate you; but bring in God's truth, and let that be your shield and buckler; let that be the mystic cloud in the light of which you find your way through the wilderness of this world; and let that truth be the indication of God's presence; let that truth enable you to sing, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge;" see if they won't hate you then. Yet the Saviour says, "Sanctify them through thy truth." Dangerous doctrine, say some. What, you, a poor moth, a poor maggot, blind as death itself, you sit down in the seat of the scornful, and charge God's truth with an awful lie! The Saviour says, "Sanctify them through thy truth. For their sakes I sanctify myself," set myself apart, and devote myself to God, "that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Why, in most cases, if a magazine or a newspaper write an article concerning a minister or congregation where the truth is, it generally consists of two things; the first is fulsome flattery;—won't they like this?—but before you get to the end of the article you will find they have got some bitter things to tell you; so they write in a feasible way, only to get an opportunity, as we say in common parlance, to give you a slap, that's all, for they can't keep their enmity in; it will ooze out, it will show itself. Well, let us take that as a badge of honour; let us take it as setting us free from the "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you." "Baptized in the cloud." Ah, that man is over head and ears in high doctrine. Of course I am, and I mean to be, God keeping me there; can't be in a better place. The cloud had a dark side; he that believeth the truth shall be saved by it, made free by it, that's the light side; he that believeth not shall be damned, that's the dark side. So, then, the first step in saintship, the manifestation of it, is the reception of Christ; the second is the reception of the truth, baptized in the cloud, severed from Egypt, from the world. The third step in this saintship—for this is the apostle's idea, as we shall presently see, is that of salvation. "Baptized," or consecrated, "unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Now you are aware, most of you, that I am a Baptist, and some of you that are not Baptists tell us that the Egyptians were baptized, not the Israelites. Now the Egyptians were drowned. To be baptized means to go down and come up again, but to be drowned means to go down and stop there: there's a great difference between the two. The Egyptians didn't come up again, they were drowned; the Israelites went down and came up again, and they came up into freedom,

into a newness of life, They hardly knew themselves when they got to the opposite shore, and stood upon this sea of glass I shall presently have to notice, and there sang, "The Lord hath triumphed gloriously." And so they were immersed in salvation, they were swallowed up in salvation; but Pharaoh and his host were swallowed up in condemnation. The one went down to rise no more, the other went down in order that they might come up triumphant, and thereby testify of the great things God had done, still going on with this consecration. And so, then, the more you know of God's salvation, the more you will feel consecrated to him.

Now these Israelites did in type do what is described in this chapter. It is said in this chapter,—and I want you to understand it, and understand it clearly,—“that they overcame the beast, and his image, and his mark and the number of his name;” these stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.” What are the harps of God? The truths of the gospel. We, as New Testament believers, must not take the harps of God literally there—not the harps of man, mind! David's harps, that he made, were the harps of man; the psalteries he made yielded him music. And nature itself vibrates to music; whether a man has any taste for it, or scientific capabilities of it, there is something in music that doth, as we say, charm the savage breast even! David's harps and psalteries were the harps and psalteries of man; but they had a typical meaning. But those that stand upon the vantage-ground of victory have the harps of God, that is, the truths of God. Our proof of this—I will name it, because it will go into print—71st Psalm, 22nd verse; “I will praise thee with the psaltery.” Well, but, David, what do you mean? “Even thy truth, O my God.” There it is. The harps of God are the truths of God, and every minister ought to be a skilful musician; he ought to play the harp of election, the harp of predestination, the harp of everlasting love, the harp of mediation, the harp of promise, the harp of the new covenant; he ought to take these harps—though sometimes they hang upon the willows—and to play them off in such a way as shall charm away the sorrows and troubles of the people of God, and make them forget the whole, and say, “Come, bring forth the fatted calf, and let us have the music and dancing, and let the soul go forth by the music of these heavenly truths in the dances of them that make merry!” And so it was with these that stood on the vantage-ground of victory. These are the saints of God, receiving the Lamb of God, immersed in the truth of God, realizing the salvation of God, and that victory which he hath wrought; these are the saints, devoted to and consecrated to God. But they overcame the beast. This beast is a very curious personage; he has puzzled all the learned men in the world to find out who he is. Greek, Latin, Hebrew, all have been set to work to find out the number of the beast, but they have not been able to decipher it, somehow or other. But the Christian finds it out easily enough. How does the Christian find it out? The Christian says to himself, Well, here's the beast; here's the image, here's the mark, here's the number of his name; and I am such a believer in the Bible that I believe the interpretation's contained somewhere in the Bible, if I can but hit upon it; and if it is not contained there I would not give three halfpence for anybody else's interpretation; uninspired authority is miserable authority in things that are eternal. The Christian sees that the beast means the whole body of sin and error, religious and irreligious. Popery the beast? Popery is only one limb of the beast. Mahometanism the beast? Only one limb of it. Puseyism? It's only the point of the tail of it. Other systems? They are only so many parts of the beast. Let us hear the word of God upon it. Now here is a fourfold victory: the beast, the image, the mark, the number of his name; and these saints were saints in conquering him. In the 11th of the Hebrews there are four acts of faith which Moses, by the grace of God, was blessed with; and these four acts of faith explain this victory. “When he was come to years, he refused to be called the

son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." Let me be with the people of God, let me be one of the people of God, let me be one of the children of God, let me be one of the sheep of God, let me be a subject of the kingdom of God—then, if I am one of the people of God, the God of the people will be my portion. "He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." He knew they couldn't last long, and therefore he contrasted the two; he saw that that would not last long, and contrasted that with that which would last long. "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." He thus, by his faith in Christ, overcame the beast—that is, the devil—in any and in every shape possible. I take the beast, therefore, not to denote any denomination, sect, or party, but to mean the whole of the devil's Satanic power, let it be in what shape or form it may. And so the Saviour's victory is universal; he overcame all. So the man that lays hold of Christ, and receives him, doth thereby receive victory over this wild beast, this body of sin and error, which Satan delights to use to the damnation of men. Also his image; Moses overcame his image. The image is the representative of a thing; the image in that case was Pharaoh; "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." Just so with you. There's a poor, nervous woman who has a devil of a husband, and the more she loves God the more that husband is a devil to her. The Lord will put you to rights one of these days, depend upon it, that he will. There's a godly man has a devil of a wife, and the more he loves God the greater devil the woman is; for when a woman turns devil she generally turns seven devils at once. A variety of private persecution in our day—nasty, sly insults, annoyances, and mortifying movements of all kinds. Never mind; fear them not; Moses forsook Egypt, do thou the same; stay not where our Lord is crucified; run from the people that crucify him to the people that glorify him; run from the people that hate him to the people that love him, run from the people that despise him to the people that adore him; run from the people that would lower him, and cast him down from his excellency, to the people that exalt him, and whose language is, "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." So that the image is an embodiment of the beast. Moses feared not the wrath of the king; so fear ye not the wrath of Jezebel, fear ye not the wrath of Ahab, fear not the wrath of Haman, fear not the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar—though he may cast thee into the furnace, the Son of God will be there, and thou shalt be triumphant, all overcoming his image.

Now comes his mark; mark means faith. If I have faith in popery, my faith is the mark of the beast; if I have faith in the pleasures of the world, the honours and gains of the world, my faith is the mark of the beast. If I am a believer in silver and gold, that the more I can scrape together the happier I shall be, then my faith is the mark of the beast, and I give God the lie, for he declares riches to be deceitful, and how that can make us happy that is in itself deceitful I do not know, and I do not want to know. So to overcome the mark of the beast is to overcome all false confidence; for every false confidence, confidence in the wrong object, is the mark of the beast. Now mark the third act of faith, "Through faith Moses kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them;" and he thus overcame the mark, erased the mark of false confidence, and appeared with the true mark upon him of faith. Faith is the spot of God's children; faith in Christ is the spot of God's children. Set a mark upon those that sigh and cry for the substituting of human invention for divine order; and to those who were to destroy the others it was said, "Come not nigh any man upon whom is the mark."

Then the number of his name—six hundred and sixty-six. My *very* dear friend, Cardinal Wiseman, he does chuckle over, and well he might, and smile at, the interpretation we Protestants give of the 666. I will tell you what it is. You take the Hebrew word for Rome—*Romiith*, and you will find in that word numerical letters enough to make up 666; and that is our interpretation, and my friend the Cardinal smiles at our simplicity, and well he might. Then we take the Greek word *Lateinos*, which is the Greek way of pronouncing the word *Latin*, and in that also you shall find just the letters, numbering letters, that amount to 666. Thus, our Protestant divines tell us, the Hebrew word will give us the place of the beast, Rome; and *Lateinos* will give us his language—namely, Latin; for they say they speak in Latin because it is a language the Devil does not understand; I do not think there is any language he understands better than he does Latin. Now that is the Protestant interpretation; a very learned sort of thing; and my friend the Cardinal, he smiles at it, takes an extra pinch, buys a better cigar, quite enjoys our simplicity, and well he might. Presently in comes the plain, rough Christian, that understands the ductility of numbers, that understands both their expansive and their contractive power; and the Christian knows how to so handle that number as to make it apply to any amount whatever—666 thousand, 666 million, 666 billion, 666 trillion, 666 quintillion, sextillion, septillion,—go up as high as you like in the arithmetic scale. The Christian knows that that number is both an expansive and a contractive number, and capable of any expansion whatever. And the matter stands thus:—the number of his name,—Pharaoh was the representation of all his army, and that army, whatever was its number, was the number of his name; and the Israelites overcame them all. Napoleon stands the representative not only of 600,000 military men, but he stands the representative of a vast empire, millions of men; that is the number; so that you may have 666 millions, if you like, but there is not that there; that would be half the population of the globe; but whatever the number may be represented by the ruler or the governor, if you overcome the whole, that is overcoming the number of his name. David refers to this very thing; there he is, a solitary man: “Though ten thousand should set themselves against me, my heart shall not fear;” I will overcome the number of his name, let them be as numerous as they may. See the solitary Mordecai; see the hundred and twenty-seven provinces rolling in upon a few scattered and helpless Jews; see Mordecai calling upon the living God; see that living God step in; see the tide of these hundred and twenty-seven provinces, containing millions of beings, roll back, recede, the people delivered, Mordecai exalted, God triumphant, the people happy, the enemy confounded, the victory won; and they may well sing the song of Moses and the Lamb: “Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.” Thus, to overcome the beast is to receive Christ’s universal victory, he having conquered all. To overcome his image is to overcome any personal representation of him that you may have to encounter. To overcome his mark is to despise his faith, and come into the faith of the gospel. The number of his name, the number he represents. The Pope, for instance, he represents at this time, according to their own account, about 130 millions; and if the devil does not love the Pope, he ought to be ashamed of himself. I think so; he is a thorough friend of the devil, I make no hesitation in saying this. I am glad we have for a little time some cardinals and priests in this country; I am not at all alarmed about them myself; I am not going whining about to frighten myself at their red stockings, nor at the beastly wretches that you see walking the streets sometimes—women I suppose they are—dressed up like the devil himself. I am glad they do walk the streets; for every sensible man’s stomach heaves when he sees the nasty brutes, degraded into such a shape, and form, and appearance. As foreign, all such conduct is, to the gospel as hell is to heaven; and,

therefore, they foam out their own shame, make themselves despised by every sensible man, especially by every Christian man.

Now then, the saints of God, then, were those thus consecrated by the blood of the Lamb, immersed in God's truth, realizing this victory. They stood upon the sea of glass, or by the glassy sea, mingled with fire. Here the Red Sea is meant; not the same sea meant here as is meant before, in a chapter farther back; here the Red Sea is meant. They stood on the shores of that sea, called the sea of glass because it reflects its contents; mingled with fire, because that Red Sea was mingled with the fiery judgments of God upon Pharaoh. The Egyptians, like your sins, ye have seen to-day, unatoned for; when once atoned for and gone, ye shall see no more for ever. So they stand, not upon the sea, but by the sea, on the shore, the vantage-ground of victory; and they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, as a type; but the song of the Lamb, as the Son of God; Moses the servant of God, Christ the Son of God; and they sing one as a type of the other,

Now their standing on the sea of glass, then, means their standing by the side of the Red Sea, where they saw the Egyptians dead upon the water, where they personally bare testimony that God had triumphed gloriously. So the Christian now, he is brought to take his stand by faith upon where the victory is wrought, where his sins are dead, lost their life, and not one dog shall be able ever to move his tongue against the children of Israel.

Now *the testimony these saints bear*: "Just and true are thy ways." Here you see, in the first place, sovereignty; God having mercy upon whom he will; and he is just in that, because he is at liberty to do what he will with his own. Second, here is mediation, where God is, in the legal sense of the word, just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Third, promise. If any man make a positive promise, he is unjust not to fulfil it. Now, if you gave a positive threatening, positively so, and did not fulfil it, you would not be unjust. But if you gave a positive promise, and did not fulfil it, you would be unjust. Say you, I cannot understand that. I can; for though the person deserve the threatening, yet in withdrawing the threatening you would not do him any harm, and, therefore, there would be no injustice. So if any of you have come this morning with any threatenings towards any, you will be much more merciful and not the less just, in withdrawing your threatening. But if you make a positive promise, positive,—mind, no conditions,—and get that person to lean upon that promise, and draw him in consequence into a certain path by that promise, and he expects support, and indeed the fulfilment of the promise, and after you have done that you withdraw the promise, then you are both unfaithful and unjust. Now our God has found a way to withdraw his threatenings from us, and in so doing he is merciful, and not the less just. But as to his promise. God is not unrighteous to withdraw the promise; he will never withdraw the promise. He drew Abraham by promise out of Ur of the Chaldees; did God ever withdraw that promise? He drew Isaac along by promise, Jacob, Joseph, and all his saints; has he ever withdrawn the promise? Never, never; made the promise positive, independent of any goodness or badness in the creature. "In blessing I will bless." Their sins couldn't hinder; their good works couldn't help; the promise was yea and amen. Well, therefore, may the saints sing, "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."