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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—SYMPOSIUM ON THE PULPIT: "IS THE PULPIT DECLINING IN POWER? IF SO, WHAT IS THE REMEDY?"

NO. III.

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THIS is not a question of mere theoretical interest or speculative curiosity; it is of profound significance in its practical bearings. It may involve a challenge of Christianity's one distinctive method of conquest. It certainly lifts an interrogation point right in front of the Church's chief agency for securing the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The question not only concerns the pulpit, but the pulpit at the point of its excellent glory. Were it a question of decline in learning or oratory or fervor or tact, it would not be of such wide and vital moment. But we are asked to consider whether the pulpit is declining in *power*. And power is the one attribute crowning all a minister's accomplishments. Power the pulpit must have, or be put aside as something neither the Church nor the world has any use for.

Let us define our terms; for in discussion like this we want exact limitations. We need to know just where we are placing our feet.

By "the pulpit" we are to understand the stated and orderly ministry of the Word. Not a John-the-Baptist prelude, nor a spasmodic burst of evangelism; but the established preaching of the gospel in the presence of organized congregations.

"Power" may be defined capability of producing an effect; intelligent power, the ability to produce a designed effect. As "the pulpit" is conspicuously designed for "salvation," in the broad, deep sense of that word—*i. e.*, for reaching and rescuing men, and building them up in Christ Jesus—the power of the pulpit is its ability to produce this single and supreme effect. Its power in any other direction is subordinate, and chiefly, if not wholly, determined by its weight of spiritual transformation. The pulpit is educational and reform-

done, no life would be worth the living! Jesus Christ proclaimed the truth throughout His public life, and stood to it there in the garden—One against many—that the basis, the only true basis of the social structure, is self-renouncing love. True, His was not an enviable position regarded human-wise. But one with God is not merely a majority, but victory, which is infinitely more; victory, which is not measurable by immediate results, but by the fruitage of eternity. The man who stands in a minority of one, when the motive impelling him is the unselfish love of his fellows and the yearning to do what he may in their behalf, at whatever cost to himself, that man is victor, though he be bound and spat upon and scourged and crucified. And no man can rob him of his joy in victory.

"Whoso takes the world's life on him and his own lays down,
He, dying so, lives."

O for the spirit that moved the divine Christ to stretch out His hands for the binding! the love that is conscious of the will of God in the sacrifice! O for the spirit that inspired the words of Paul to the brethren of Cæsarea: "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus!" O for the spirit that led Nicanor Gomez, our missionary in Mexico, to brave death and to die, a few months since, for the testimony of Jesus! We need the martyr-spirit; we, here in this Christian land, with our open Bibles and freedom of conscience. Crucifixion is an act of life; the nailing to the cross of self, that loves life, that loves ease, that loves honor, that cannot endure humiliations. It is the Spirit of the cross that we need. Out of the possession and exercise of that Spirit will issue results in blessing richer than we have power to imagine. What happens to me matters little; but what happens to the truth matters much. If by my loving renunciation of self one soul may be led to look higher than it yet has looked, then, whatever the pain of the renunciation, be it mine to endure it.

My right to life and life's enjoyments ceases at the moment when these stand between another's soul and life. It was at such a moment as this that the Lord Jesus held out His hands for the binding. His will was in the bonds. He was gladly, lovingly, freely bound. Then is man freest when bound by love. And from the midst of such a bondage rises a song that cannot be suppressed, like unto that which was echoed by the walls of Philippi's jail, where Paul and Silas were, for their love of Christ.

Ah! dear friends, you think that to be a Christian means to give up liberty; to enter upon a *via crucis*—a way of the cross; to turn the back upon the delights of life. So it does, in some sort; but the only liberty given up is the liberty of wrong-doing; the only cross is the cross upon which what burdens you is to be crucified; the only delights, upon which the back is turned, are those which, rainbow-like, are begotten of tears, the children of clouds. Let Christ take you prisoner by the love that once led Him to be prisoner for you, and you shall find that in the bonds of His love you are free indeed; that the cross He imposes is easy and light; and that in His service—which is a service ever in His presence—there is fulness of joy!

GOD'S VOICE IN THE COOL OF THE DAY.

A SUMMER EVENING MEDITATION; IN THE WOODLAND CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, BY LEONARD WOOLSEY BACON.

They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.—Gen. iii: 8.

THAT thing, in this text, which provokes the obvious objection of the superficial reader, and the cheap and easy ridicule of the caviler, is the very thing which, to the critical and thoughtful student, confirms the venerable and primeval antiquity of the document of which it forms a part. For certainly the objection is so obvious that any bright child can see it and state it; we have a conception of God put before us which by no means represents Him to

us as a spirit—omnipresent, infinite. He seems, according to this language, to come and go, to be there among the trees in the evening, but to be gone by daylight—a local divinity having his resorts, and his times and seasons, asking questions, as if he would be informed, and capable of being foiled by evasions, or avoided by hiding in the thickets. How unlike, you would say, to the object of Paul's adoration, the "King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God," or to Him whom David worshiped in his solemn psalm: "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,
Thou understandest my thoughts afar off.
Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
The darkness hideth not from thee.
The darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

—Or how unlike to Him of whom Job spoke out of the midst of his afflictions:

Behold, I go forward, but he is not there,
And backward, but I cannot perceive him;
On the left hand, where he doth work,
But I cannot behold him;
He hideth himself on the right hand,
That I cannot see him.
But he knoweth the way that I take.

Now this story might very easily be rewritten in such a way as to avoid this easy and obvious objection. We might say of this primeval pair: "By day their thoughts were distracted from the contemplation of God. They were busy with the objects and the temptations of sense. They were delighted with the pleasures of sin. The voice of God in the conscience, in the revelations of nature, in the inward monitions of the Spirit, was first unheeded and then unheard. He was not absent—He who is in every place; He was "before them, but they saw him not; at their right hand, but they beheld him not." But by-and-by the dimness and the cool of evening twilight came. The garish brightness of the world of sense was obscured to them; their feverish unrest was stilled; it was an hour for thought and the knowledge of spiritual reality. In the dimness of the garden-shades they began once more to appre-

hend those things to which the eye of the mind had been closed and the spiritual ear been stopped—the righteousness and the holy law of the infinite Creator—as if His unchangeable holiness, which is from eternity to eternity, had just begun to speak to their hearts there among the trees of the garden in the cool of the day."

It would have been an easy trick of literary art to write the story thus with philosophical precision, guarding it securely against the chances of objection on that side. But at once, how obviously and inevitably it would have been said on the other side, "This is no record from the days of the world's childhood. The whole style of it shows a later hand. It comes from an age of reflection and criticism, when people had come to distinguish neatly between subjective and objective. It cannot have been a document of the primeval ages. If it had been offered to a primeval people, they would not have understood it." The objectors that are hard to suit with these early stories of Genesis as they are, would have been still harder to suit with them as they might have been. But thoughtful and studious scholars take these venerable documents in hand with an affection like that with which they trace the shattered inscription on the Moabite Stone, or decipher the cylinders of the Babylonish archives. They feel the morning-breeze of history blowing through them. They are tales of the childhood of the human race—tales about children (in simplicity) given to children, by the hand of children, and understood only when they are read in the spirit of little children.

If we were to be bound by the old-fashioned but utterly unfounded notion that all these pages are an original writing from the hand of Moses, we might be troubled to account for a style so unlike that of a great philosopher, scholar and statesman such as Moses surely was. But we recognize here a compilation of documents far older than Moses; we can discover, sometimes, the seams where they are joined

together, and can read through the paper the water-marks of an antiquity so remote as of itself to command our veneration.

I do not doubt that in that form in which I have suggested that the story might have been rewritten according to modern phraseology, we have a true re-statement of the practical religious lesson which the verse contains for ourselves. We, also, hear the voice of God in the cool of the day, when we give no hearing to it at all under the heat and burden of the day. Let me read you some words of Dr. Horace Bushnell, out of that prose-poem of his on "The Moral Uses of the Night."

"To live in a perpetual day and have what we call the hours of business ceaseless, even as the flow of rivers, would leave us no room for reflection. We should be like seas in the trade-winds, never getting still enough to reflect anything. Our soul would be blind to itself by reason of the perpetual seeing of our eyes. God therefore draws a curtain over his light, checks the busy hours of work and the turmoil of trade, and recalls us to moods of silence and meditative thoughtfulness in the depths of our own spirit. Many of us, I know, are sadly indisposed to this, and even wretchedly incapable of it. Yet, when their day is ended, even such will naturally fall into a different mood. If the day has not gone well, and they are much wearied by its engagements, it will be difficult sometimes not to meet the question, who they are, that they should be wrestling with such struggles? It is quite natural, too, for them, going over the day, to ask what, after all, it amounts to? And then it will be strange if they do not sometimes go a little further and ask whether they are going, on what point moving, in such a life? Deeper and more serious natures, even though sadly imbued with guilt, will be turned almost of course to some kind of review. Another day is gone, its works are ended. Ambition has spent the fever of another day. Pleasure has exhausted her charms. Idleness itself is weary. And now, as the world grows still and excitement dies away, the mind calls off its activity and turns it inward on itself. It hears no call of God, perhaps, and thinks of doing nothing as a duty. But a pause has come, and something it must think of, for it cannot stand still. Detained by nothing now on hand, it travels far, and makes a large review. It takes in, as it were, by snatches, other worlds. It touches the springs of its own immortal wants, and they answer quick and heavily. Whatever wrong has been committed stalks into the mind with an appalling tread. If God is a subject unwelcome, and guilt another even more unwelcome, the moral nature

has so great advantage now, and, withal, so great sensibility that the door of the soul is held open to things not welcome. All those highest and most piercing truths that most deeply concern the great problem of life will often come nigh to thoughtful men in the dusk of their evenings and their hours of retirement to rest. The night is the judgment-bar of the day."

This method of God by which He brings in the coolness and hush of evening that so we may hear that voice of His which we cannot or will not hear in the day, is a very common way of His in seeking our attention. Sometimes, indeed, He uses to raise His tone, and speak to us no more in a still, small voice, but, when we seem resolved not to listen, in tones sharp, piercing, thunderous, as when He utters Himself for us in stunning bereavement, or in the crash of some overwhelming ruin. But quite as often, have we not known Him deal with His unquiet and inattentive children as a skilful teacher with a turbulent school, rather lowering His voice than raising it, and waiting for a lull to come over their turbulence, when they shall hear Him all the more intently because He speaks so gently and still?

There come such eventides of life again and again in the midst of the common hey-day of our prosperity and success. It seems, as we look into financial history, as if God had appointed a sort of periodical vicissitude, as of day and night, by which about once in so many years there should be let down a twilight curtain of *commercial reverses*—of hard times—veiling our dazzling hopes and successes, and partly stilling the incessant tumult of business; and the history of the churches will prove how commonly, at such a time, there are many who hear the voice of God speaking to them in the cool of the day, to whom His voice had never seemed audible before. It is very common that a religious revival follows close upon a financial revolution.

In like manner the conventional *mourning customs* of society, against which there is a disposition sometimes

* "Moral Uses of Dark Things," pp. 24, 25.

to protest, are, with many a heedless soul, deafened with the continual din of society, God's opportunity of making His voice heard. One sits apart, sequestered, unwillingly perhaps, from gaiety and amusement, and hears through the stillness the distant music of the world's merry-making, and hears with it the whisper of a sweet, serious voice, all unheard before, putting questions that take hold on eternity, and waiting patiently for the soul's reply.

Sometimes it is through *sickness or bodily infirmity* that God's importunate love secures to itself this "still hour" of converse with His child. The quiet of the sick-room is a good place to hear unwonted and unheeded things. The dimness of failing vision, or the quiet of impaired hearing, help to make a vacant place in life into which divine thoughts and words may enter. It was to such, shut out in some measure from common companionships, that our Lord seems to have had readiest access when on earth. I think often of that meeting with the deaf and dumb man in the crowd, when the good Lord—noting, doubtless, the alert, anxious eye of the deaf man quick to notice every change and motion, and seeking to draw the man's undivided attention to Himself before beginning to do His healing work—"took him by the hand and led him out of the town." And I have wondered whether, as exigencies of health, need of rest and change, mere lassitude and ennui, perhaps the very craving for continued diversion of mind, have taken you, at this season, into the country, it may not be that by means of that outward motive or that inward craving, the Lord had taken you by the hand and led you out of the town, that so in the still hours you might hear the voice of God walking amid the trees of the wood—you, who had failed to remember that alway, amid all the courses of society and the vicissitudes of men in thronging cities, "the Lord their God is with them, and the shout of a King is among them."

How wholly fatherly is that persistence with which God seems sometimes

to enforce an audience with His reluctant child, before the day wholly departs and the darkness comes! "Poor child of man," He seems to say to us, "it has been a distracting day. Go to; I will give thee a little quiet that we may speak together, that so thou mayst acquaint thyself with God and be at peace." Thus it is a part of God's common method with man, that *old age* is made a still and peaceful ante-chamber to eternity. The light is dimmed to a twilight, that it no longer dazzles and distracts. The ear is muffled, that importunate sounds intrude not. Failing strength, impaired mental faculties, enforce retirement from accustomed activities and collisions. The hot and turbulent passions of manhood subside. It is the cool of the day. The quiet of it is even irksome. But O, the voice of comfort and hope that through this stillness finds its way to the hearts that are not shut and barred against it!

But why wait for the blessing of this divine converse until the last fading hours of life? Why seem to invite decrepitude and failure and "mere oblivion" from the Father of good gifts, as the condition on which we will accept His best gift, that is, Himself?—why, when every day brings to you its still hour for meditation, its evening weariness, its drawn curtain of the twilight, its lull from the noise of business and the stir of household duty, its cooling-time from feverish passions and agitations? Never, and not in any place, the voice of God is wholly silent, if you would but listen. This very evening you might hear His footsteps among the trees if you would not try to hide yourself from Him. Think of it, as you sit this evening on your veranda, or from your window catch the light rustle of the leaves, "shaking off upon the nightwind the dust of day;"* think how you have been wont to hide yourself away from God among the multitude of His own fair gifts, as the sinful pair hid themselves from Him among the trees of His own Paradise; listen to

* Victor Hugo, *Chants de Crépuscule* — La Prière Pour Tous.

these last voices of the dying Sabbath; stifle not the whispers of memory and conscience; shut not the ear to the gentle words of encouragement and hope, to the voice which saith, Come unto me, ye weary. See! the gates of the lost Paradise are no longer wholly closed to you; the flaming sword has ceased to wave; and where once the sentinel cherubs stood to bar the way, there standeth one thorn-crowned, with wounded hands, saying, Enter in; I am the Door. Refuse Him not, O weary with the heat, O heavy-laden with the burdens of the day! but enter into the Paradise of God, and taste the tree of Life that grows beside the living stream, and hear again the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

A CHRISTIAN MEMORY.

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I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.—2 Peter iii: 1.

THE power of memory is, perhaps, the most amazing part of our mental equipment. It is a golden thread that links infancy and age, on which are hung, like pearls, varied facts and experiences of every hue. It is through memory we are assured of our personal identity. Time, like a resistless flood, pours year by year as into a fathomless abyss; but memory drops her silver hooks into the depths, and brings back to thought that which has vanished from vision. Memory has her servant, recollection, an invisible librarian running about the chambers of the mind, to find what she calls for. It is the working of a perennial miracle. Through memory we get, as through a window looking into eternal space, a hint of the immortal dimensions of a human soul. Now God uses this faculty as a factor in the work of building up Christian character. Notice a few points.

1. The Gospel has a history to be remembered. The central facts of Christ's life, the apostolic period, and other

epochs of Christianity, are certainly as real as those of Roman or English domination.

2. History repeats itself ordinarily; but this history of the Gospel can never be repeated. Christ has suffered once for all. "This is the last time," as John says, the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. A Christian memory is swift to remember this.

3. In the revelation of His "memorial name" Jehovah has emphasized the significance of memory. He is not an abstraction, a far-distant personality, even, but "the Father of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob"—a historic God. He has made a history of Himself within our earthly sphere; and thus, by stooping to our understanding, has endeared Himself to us by personal intercourse and fatherly guidance. We are to be mindful of His covenant and remember His dealings. That history is completer now than when Moses lived. God is now known to us as "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

To a British heart, "Waterloo and Wellington" are words that stir up patriotic memories; and to our hearts the names of Washington and Lincoln are full of heroic inspiration. It would be base to forget them. And is not God grieved when men forget His Son? You are disconcerted, annoyed, pained, when you meet a former acquaintance whom you remember well, and he says, "I cannot recall your name!"

Again, keep in mind that the life our Lord in glory is linked with that of His redemptive work on earth, as truly as your existence there, some day, will be connected with your residence here on earth.

When Conkling presented the name of Grant to the Chicago convention, he answered the query, "Whence does he come?" with the one significant, thrilling word, "Appomattox." The vast audience was electrified. The memories of battle and of victory were roused: the surrender of Lee and the interview of the generals under the apple tree, with other stirring thoughts, were brought to mind as the query was thus