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→ SERMONS ←

THE REDEMPTIVE ELEMENT IN CHRISTIANITY JUSTIFIED
BY THE MORAL EXPERIENCE OF MAN.

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In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.—EPHESIANS i., 7.

THOSE whose minds are awake to such things will detect in this passage a certain flush of color, a throb, a peculiar intensity of phrase, which marks the passage as being autobiographical. Paul had *lived* it before he could write it. The language echoes the virgin Christian experience of a rare man, a man both intellectual and indomitable, one who dealt with Christianity at first hand, who had (what we do not always remember) no New Testament to guide him, and who gained his faith mainly out of what had happened when his own angry and haughty nature met its Master and Saviour.

This occurrence took place, as we know, on the travelled road, on the southeastern flank of Mount Hermon, a few miles southwest of the old Syrian city of Damascus; Paul being then about thirty-five years old. Conversion is not too great a name for such a transformation. Paul is a friend made out of a foe, as sometimes we have seen a statue or other emblem of peace made from metal re-cast from molten cannon. Paul had been *re-cast*. He had been through the furnace and what had issued from that furnace with him was this thought of the Gospel as being a redemption; more than a code, like the Mosaic law; more than a culture, like that of the Greek literature; more

it is built upward in its hopes, aspirations and expectations heavenward.

Second—a Christian citizen is subject to Cæsar. Cæsar stands for the state—for civic law and duty. If Christ esteemed the Jew as the subject of such an authority as the Roman Cæsar, surely He esteems the Christian as the subject of such an authority as the American Republic. If He called men to submit to force in authority, much more He calls men to submit to freedom in authority. The American Republic is freedom in authority. The Christian has a double duty. He has to submit to civic as well as sacred authority, but he is not to mix his submission. The mixing of Church and state has brought misery to millions. Wars, persecutions, inquisitions and infidelity constitute the misery that comes of joining what God has by the words of Christ put asunder. Here is the error of Romanism and the wisdom of Protestantism.

Third—a Christian citizen is a consci-

entious citizen. His conscience toward God quickens his conscience toward the state. Would all citizens were Christians, for then they would be better citizens. There would then be more conscience in civic affairs, and surely that is what is needed every where in this broad Republic. Such a citizen renders to the state its dues. The citizen's foremost duty to the state is the duty of patriotism. The love of your land, its institutions and its inhabitants is the sacred duty of every citizen. It is not a sentiment only. Such love will seek to do no harm to the state, though it may earnestly seek to reform its follies.

Purity in politics is due the state as well as patriotism. Christ would make men Christians so that they should put conscience into their votes as citizens. The state needs such men of purity and principle rather than of party, whose voices and votes shall overturn evils, such evils as polygamy and intemperance.

CITY EVANGELIZATION—ITS METHODS.*

BY MOSES D. HOGK, D.D., RICHMOND, VA.

In the destitute districts of our cities I venture to suggest that we should combine two plans of operation—the establishment of a few large churches and the multiplication of small centres of evangelistic effort. There is a strange power in the sympathy and zeal engendered by the aggregation of numbers in a noble enterprise. The Church of England has taken advantage of this principle in the use of its great cathedrals for popular services. This is notably true of St. Paul's Cathedral and of Westminster Abbey. Once these stately edifices were the shrines of exclusive, aristocratic churchism; now they are thronged by the multitude, made up of all sorts and conditions of men, attracted by the most eloquent and learned divines of the English Establishment. If the best known, most honored ministers of our great city churches would each select the most des-

titute locality known to him, inhabited by the most ignorant and degraded of the population, and in the largest building which could be secured for the purpose would commence an afternoon or a night service, results the most cheering would crown these labors of love. The inhabitants of these neglected localities would be conciliated by the spectacle of men constrained only by love for their souls engaged in these self-denying toils; and far more important than that, men who have proved their power by the capacity they have shown in the management of the great charges committed to them are the men best qualified to minister to those who differ from the heathen only in speaking the English language and in adopting the vices of civilization. And when under their ministrations souls are awakened, and the cry, "What must I do to be saved?" is

* Part of an address delivered at the Presbyterian Centennial in Philadelphia, May 24th, 1888. See page 685.

heard, then the experience, the prudence and the sympathy of such pastors will find the noblest field of exercise.

I know the objections that can be urged to such a course. I know how city pastors are already overburdened, how they are pressed beyond measure by exacting duties regularly recurring, and distracted by unexpected demands on their time; but, brethren, we do not know how much work we can accomplish under the fresh incitement of new and promising avenues for usefulness opening immediately before us and beckoning on to success surpassing any we have hitherto known.

If I, an humble minister in a small city, without presumption, might refer to my own experience in mission work, I would say that for three years I have preached three times every Sabbath, the third service being held in what is called the Old Market Hall, the largest in Richmond, and situated in a densely populated neighborhood, singularly overlooked and in sore need of what the Gospel alone can supply. There I have a congregation limited only by the size of the building.

It is an eager, expectant throng, the very sight of which is at once subduing and animating. If I am fatigued by the second service in my church in the afternoon, I am refreshed and invigorated by the third, held in the hall at night.

At first my congregations were disorderly, many of them never having attended a religious service in their lives; but now they are as decorous as any of yours are on a sacramental Sabbath. We have connected with this mission a medical infirmary, free of charge; a Bible-class, a Sabbath-school, prayer-meetings in private houses, a society, composed of the young ladies of my church, rendering help in every way in their power to girls living in the vicinity of the hall, and every Thursday night a meeting for inquirers seeking the way of life; and the last one I attended was the most encouraging of all since I commenced my work in that part of the city.

I number these three years among the most delightful of my life, and I can

never be too grateful for the privilege of gathering such a multitude around me, so willing to be instructed, and rewarding my interest in them by the most unmistakable evidences of affection.

In providing places for the gathering of the people in such localities, it will often be found that a public hall or large apartment in some building devoted to secular purposes, is more attractive than a church edifice. Mortifying though it be, it is a fact that many of those whom we wish to reach regard churches as the retreats of spiritual aristocracy. Ecclesiastical architecture has no charm in their eyes. The freedom of a hall into which they can enter unembarrassed, as open to them as a public square, where they can feel at ease in their working clothes—the only ones they have, it may be—and where there is no reminder of social inequalities, is something they appreciate most decidedly, and forms a strong inducement to attend the religious services to which they have been invited. This must not be forgotten by those who seek to gather in the classes that have no pleasant associations with the House of God. That will come afterwards, if they can be interested in the first services which they have been persuaded to attend.

There is one department of worship which may be made especially attractive to the multitude gathered at our mission stations. All of us have felt what Augustine experienced in listening to the commingled voices of the great congregation lifted up in praise, though we might not be able to express it as he has done. "How freely," says he, "was I made to weep by those hymns and spiritual songs, how transported by the voice of the congregation sweetly singing. The melody of their voices filled my ear, and divine truth was poured into my heart. Then burned the flame of devotion in my soul and gushing tears flowed from my eyes, as well they might." Such music goes down into the memory as dew sinks into the heart of a rose, giving refreshment and gaining sweetness.

The hymns which never wear out are those which are rich in evangelical truth,

expressed in the language of true poetry; and yet for the masses hymns made up chiefly of chorus are often the most effective. There may be little connection between the hymn and the chorus, so far as the thought is concerned. It does not matter. The chorus may contain but a single truth. It is all the better for that. That one idea is worked into, sung into the mind and heart by repetition, and thus the chorus is more effective than the hymn. Take this for example:

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee."

Or this;

"O, depth of mercy! can it be
That gate was left ajar for me?"

All through the week such a refrain runs through the memory; to the man on the scaffold of the house he is building, to the driver of the tram-car, to the woman bending over her needle, the words return,

"O, depth of mercy! can it be
That gate was left ajar for me?"

Hymns of *worship* are to be preferred to didactic hymns, and yet one expression concerning the worth of the soul or

the preciousness of the Saviour may awaken conviction or the hope of pardon and lead that soul to Christ.

A *solo* is out of place in congregational worship, and yet in this very city I saw hundreds in tears as Mr. Sankey sang one year ago in the Wanamaker building.

Then, with what care the preacher to such an audience must select his themes! How natural must be his manner, how patient, earnest, tender must be his spirit, and if he hopes to secure attention at all, how simple must be his style, how full of illustrations drawn from common life, that his sermons may be intelligible from end to end. A minister once rose to address one of the most ignorant audiences ever gathered. His first sentence was this: "As in physics so in ethics, like causes produce like effects!" Of course his hearers did not know even in what language he was speaking. How different would have been the introduction had Whitefield been the preacher, or Archibald Alexander, or Spurgeon, or any of God's chosen sons anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor and to move the multitude as the trees of the wood shaken by mighty winds.

SIDE ISSUES IN THE PULPIT.

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The word "gospel" has a large meaning. Its object is to regenerate not only individual human souls, but the world as well. We read of "the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," that shall rise out of the confusion and widespread ruin that sin has wrought. The Gospel is for man. It reaches to his remotest wants, and has to do with his minutest interests. Nothing that concerns men is foreign to the Gospel. Jesus sits in the centre of the Gospel system—the source of power and the source of light. From Him radiate those lines of light which are intended to penetrate and scatter all darkness. From Him proceeds that divine force which is to make itself felt wherever there is the capacity of feeling. There is no danger that the Chris-

tian minister will go so far for his subject that he will overstep the limits of the Gospel, for its wide-reaching influence and application extend beyond the farthest journeys of his thought and investigation. It is impossible for us to find a place where God has not been before us, and wherever God goes the Gospel goes. It is important that we realize this large meaning of the Gospel—that we recognize the extensive sphere of its application. The failure to do this has divided the world into two departments, sacred and secular. There is a minor sense in which this division is admissible, but in the sense in which it is usually regarded, it is purely a human work, and directly at variance with the divine plan.

The Gospel has as much to do with