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THE APPROACH OF DEATH—A NEW YEAR'S SERMON.

“Behold I come quickly.” Revelations iii. 11. (First clause.)

THE hopes, my brethren, which belong to you on the first Sabbath of a New Year, do not contemplate for yourselves a greater good than do the wishes of him who now addresses you. The object of your hopes may indeed be different from that which my wishes for you respect, but I am sure that you will not compare them, in point of intrinsic worth, or in regard to the certainty and permanency which characterize them respectively.

The state of the human mind, at a season like the present, is for the most part one of expectation. We have done with the concerns of the old year, and we are awaiting the development of a new one; and, turning down the page upon which our previous history has been written, and the lessons of experience have been recorded, we are giving licence to imagination to fill up the sheet upon which reality has not yet traced a letter. I am not wrong in supposing, that this page of the future, as it now appears to us, is full of scenes of joy; or, if in any case fear predominates over hope, the faint lines in which it traces its object, and the very undecided shading which it throws over it, stand in very strong contrast to the bold strokes with which hope paints its visions, and the bright colors in which it sets them. It is a scene of earthly joy which our imagination is describing. We are filling up the prospect of the coming year with hours of comfort and peace, and with days of prosperity. There are no clouds about that earthly horizon, as hope presents it; and an imagination under the tutelage of hope troubles us with no dreams of coming sorrow, anxiety, or painful changes. Now, my brethren, it cannot be denied that there is a degree of pleasure connected with many of those mental hallucinations to which men are exposed, during which reason is dethroned, and yet we always pity

serve but to hush you to a deeper sleep, and render more fearful the crisis when it shall arrive.

Brethren, my warning is concluded. My message perhaps may be ineffectual, its impressions may die away with the sound of your speaker's voice. But of this I am sure—if it has been received with the same interest with which it has been prepared and uttered, the scene of the judgment will show that it has not been spoken, nor heard in vain. We leave its results then, to the developments of that solemn scene.

SERMON C C C L X X X I X .

BY REV. DAVID MAGIE, D. D.

ELIZABETHTOWN, N. J.

THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT.

“Shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?”—2 Corinthians iii. 8.

NOTHING seems to reach perfection at once. In the visible, material world, we see first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. The acorn grows into a majestic oak, with its branches outspread, and its top looking boldly up to the skies. A cloud appears, and it is not bigger than a man's hand, but it increases until the heavens are black, and there is a sound of abundance of rain. The mighty river may be traced to an insignificant spring, silently oozing out of the mountain's side.

Thus, also, is it in the moral and intellectual world. We witness, everywhere, a beginning, a progress, and an ultimate development. The mind is so constituted that all its attainments, whether of knowledge or of virtue, must be made by degrees. It is impossible for every part of any given science to be comprehended at a glance. There are successive steps to be taken, and these steps have to be taken from points already gained, and acquisitions already made. No one is found to become either very wise, or very good, of a sudden. Advancement is the divine law, inscribed indelibly everywhere, and controlling all creatures and all events.

The history of the Church of God is but an expansion of this one idea. It was not deemed meet that everything should be revealed, and brought to its present state of clearness or perspicuity, at first. There was progression even here—Adam was not told all that was, subsequently, told to Abraham; nor had the father of the faithful as much light as Moses enjoyed. David had discoveries

still more perfect, and Isaiah and Daniel were carried yet further on. But none of these men saw things as fully, and with as much distinctness, as did the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Theirs was the dawn—his was the perfect day.

Everything, from the commencement, has been looking onward. Originally, and in the infancy of the world, nothing more was done than to throw into the mind a few leading essential truths. Thought was excited—expectation was awakened—heart was impressed. Enough was revealed to secure the believer's salvation, but not enough to render the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. A foundation was laid, yet the superstructure was not completed. The light became more and more distinct, until it shone out, with the unclouded brightness of noon, upon the beloved John, in the Isle of Patmos. This finished the vision.

God has not spoken since that hour. Now the volume of inspiration is complete, and not one more chapter or verse is ever to be added, while the world stands. The last and the grandest development of the purposes of divine mercy, towards our fallen race, has been made. In this respect, we stand upon the shoulders of all that have gone before us. Ours may be called the mature age of the church. The times appointed of the Father are come. We are no longer under governors and tutors.

Such, evidently, was the view of Paul. Turn to the chapter which contains the text, and weigh the remarks he here makes, in connexion with other and similar portions of the sacred volume. See what he says of the unrivalled excellency of the times, which had then commenced. There is one great thought filling his mind. His attention is fixed upon the blessed Spirit already just given, and afterward to be given still more plenteously. This, next to Christ's death, he regarded as the best of all God's favors. It was the end, the completion, the glory of all previous and repeated manifestations.

The passage before us is one of a very striking character. It speaks of the days when the Spirit was to be poured out from on high, largely and copiously, as possessing a peculiar honor and value. This is the point we are to discuss. Three questions arise—*What is the Ministration of the Spirit?*—*With what is it here compared?*—and *Why has it so distinguished a glory?* The answer to these inquiries will prepare the way for some useful inferences.

I. First—What are we to understand by *the ministration of the Spirit?*

This we shall best find out, by marking how the writer interprets his own language. No minister of the gospel ever *magnified his office* more than Paul did; but he magnified it, be it always remembered, mainly and preeminently because he was a minister of the New Testament, and not of the Old. It was his privilege, not

to rest in the letter which killeth, but to be filled with the Spirit that giveth life. In a word, he preached in the midst of revivals of religion, and his labors were accompanied by an influence which brought multitudes out of darkness into marvellous light, and from the power of Satan unto God. What, therefore, could he mean by *Ministration of the Spirit*, but his own favored times, and the times which were to follow? This is, doubtless, what he referred to, and the period embraced by it reached back over the few years which had elapsed since the death of Christ, and forward through all intervening ages, until the end of the world. It took in what we term the evangelical economy—it included these latter days.

We put, I beg you to notice, no forced construction on the Apostle's words. It is impossible to give them any other intelligible import. Our times, beginning with the era of Christ's ascension, and extending until his second coming, are here denominated the *Ministration of the Spirit*, and are so denominated because the Spirit is now given with a power, and shed down with a fulness, never known before. These are the days of the Son of man—this is the season for the display of God's convincing and converting grace. During this period especially, is it that the kingdom of truth and righteousness is to prevail on the earth. Pompous external rites have given place to deep internal influence. Altars have been forsaken, and sacrifices have ceased; but in lieu of them, we have the Holy Spirit applying to thousands of hearts the efficacy of the Saviour's atoning blood. Moses is no longer read in the synagogue, but Christ is preached in the church. The priest does not burn incense in the temple, but Jesus intercedes in heaven.

Yet, mistake me not. There never was a period when the agency of the Divine Spirit was wholly unknown. The church, which Jesus bought with his blood, is not only one in all places from the rising to the going down of the sun, but is one too in all ages, from Adam to Malachi, and from Matthew to the sounding of the last trumpet. In the days of our first parents, the God of heaven set up a kingdom, and that very kingdom still exists. Its outward ritual has been changed; its form has been altered; but it is the same church now it ever was, having the same God and Father of us all—the same Lord Jesus Christ, and the same Holy Ghost. There was a household of faith in the days of Enos, when men began to call on the name of the Lord. Noah, and the believing members of his family, belonged to this spiritual kingdom, when they went into the ark, and when they came out of it. And here all the Patriarchs had their membership. Never has there been an age without converted men, and men have never been converted without the Spirit of God.

Truth enough was given, and influence enough was felt, from the first, to save the soul. The gospel was exhibited then only by

shadows and symbols, but, thanks to God, it was the same gospel, and sinners were brought to believe and obey it, by the very same power which is now exerted to take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh. There is a difference; but it is a difference in the degree, and extent, and expansiveness of the influence, rather than in the nature of the influence itself. *Our times are the Ministration of the Spirit*, not because his power was not felt in the days of Ezra and Jeremiah, but because it was more deeply felt in those of Paul and Edwards. This blessed season began at the feast of Pentecost, and it will last until the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord.

In the very midst of this privileged period, it is our happy lot to live. The Spirit has been given to abide with the church for ever, to dwell as a Comforter in the bosom of the faithful, and to convert sinners to God; and he has thus been given *because Jesus has been glorified*. This is the grand reason. The Saviour died to redeem men from the curse of the law; but he revived, and ascended up on high, to procure for them the regenerating influence of the Spirit. This, therefore, is the *ministration* of the third person of the Trinity. Now he is making his conquests in our world. Now is he moulding the hearts of men; and, under his agency, multitudes which no one can number, are rising from the death in sin to a life of holiness. But—

II. Secondly—With what is *this ministration of the Spirit* here compared?

Turn again to the context, and you will find the answer at once. If the state of the church, since the coming of Christ, is thus called by way of eminence, *the ministration of the Spirit*, then reference must be had to the state of the same church, in all the ages and generations which preceded that coming. This follows as a necessary consequence. There may have been some special allusion to the Jewish economy, but the whole period is taken in, from the days of Righteous Abel till the death of the Son of God. Gospel times and gospel blessings are here set over against everything that preceded them, as it respects favor and privilege, whether it be the services of the men who, in the earlier ages of the world, walked before God in the simplicity of patriarchal homage, or of those who, in later days, worshipped with more of external pomp and impressiveness, in the temple at Jerusalem. There have been but two great dispensations—the one preceded, the other followed, the sacrifice of the cross. The first was the ministration of types and shadows—the last is the *ministration of the Spirit*.

Let us spend a moment in tracing out the comparison. Good men, in the former of these periods, had their minds turned to one prominent object—the advent of the Messiah; and, in the latter, the same class of men have had their minds turned to another prominent object—the gift of the Spirit. From the hour of the

first promise of mercy in Eden, to that of the devout Simeon in the temple, believers were all looking forward, with earnest expectation, to the coming of Christ. This was something which they seem never to have forgotten. It made their hearts glad in the land of their pilgrimage. But is it not a well known fact, that the promise of the Spirit to regenerate and sanctify men, pervades the New Testament almost precisely as that of a Saviour to die for them, does the Old? Ponder well this idea, I beg you. The two dispensations differ, and differ very strikingly, inasmuch as it was the main design of the one to provide an atonement, while it is no less the main design of the other, to apply that atonement. The first was an amazing theatre, erected by the power and goodness of God, for the preparation of blessings; and the latter is a theatre not less amazing, erected by the same power and goodness for the enjoyment of these blessings. One was the seed time—the other is the harvest.

You see what was in the mind of the Apostle. The *ministration of the Spirit* is put, not so much in the way of opposition, as in the way of contrast to the ministration of external symbols and distant anticipations. The case may be thus stated: Before the advent of the Messiah, believers were all expecting his appearance in our world, and were finding sustenance for their faith in what the scriptures predicted of his person and work. Every leaf of their Bible had reference to the seed of the woman. Every sacrifice that bled on the altar prefigured a nobler sacrifice, and the shedding of richer blood. But now, that the Saviour is actually come; all these types and prophecies have received their full accomplishment. Nor does anything remain for *us*, living in these latter days and in these ends of the earth, but to fix our hopes upon the copious descent of the Spirit to convert sinners from the error of their ways, and fill the world with salvation. This is our delightful anticipation—Here we take our stand.

The things compared by Paul are, therefore, perfectly obvious. They are simply these—a system of types and predictions, on the one hand, embracing as their leading idea an atonement to be made, with the rites and expiations prefiguring it; and, on the other, a system of promises and ordinances, the main idea of which is, an atonement already made, with the accompanying influences and triumphs of the Holy Spirit. This is the precise point. There we see the Patriarch at his altar, and the Jew in his temple. Here we see the Christian in his church, and the convert in a revival. One lives under an economy which, notwithstanding all the hopes it enkindles, imposes a burden that he is not well able to bear, and his courage is kept up only by the prospect of better times to come; the other is animated by witnessing the fulfilment of these anticipations.

Bear all this in mind, and you will easily understand the points

of comparison. It has fallen to our lot to live in an age of the church different from that in which Abraham talked with God, and David sung of the Messiah, and Isaiah foretold the rising glories of his kingdom. We enjoy what they only hoped for. Ours is the dispensation of evangelical times and blessings, in distinction from all that preceded it, whether in the days of Noah or Moses. This leads us to inquire—

III. Thirdly—Why *this ministration of the Spirit has so distinguished a glory?*

On this head the Apostle is very explicit. He brings to view, as we have just seen, the two states of the church, before and after Christ; written, the first of them, with ink—the last, with the Spirit of the living God; the first, on tables of stone—the last, on fleshly tables of the heart. This settles the question. You see where the superiority lies. One of these states included a long season of impressive outward rites; while the other includes a season, perhaps still longer, of deep internal power. One was a day of forms and ceremonies, the other is a day of life and feeling. The first was characterized as a dispensation, by the prevalence of the letter, which killeth; while the other is equally characterized, as a dispensation, by the prevalence of the Spirit, that giveth life.

The language of the Apostle is very significant. If a ministration of righteousness is better than one of condemnation, if a glory which remaineth has more value than a glory which is done away, if a permanent, ever enduring dispensation is to be preferred to one of a temporary character, then we, in these gospel times, are blessed above Patriarchs and Prophets. Upon us has the true light shone.

This ministration of the Spirit has superseded all that went before it. The ever enduring sacrifice of the cross has come in the stead of the daily lamb bleeding at the altar. The stars, though beautiful in themselves, are all hidden by the advance of day, and the dawn of the morning is forgotten amidst the full orb'd splendor of the meridian sun. So have the types and shadows of the ancient people of God been displaced and set aside by the superior light of the gospel. These things were never intended to be perpetual. All the symbols, and all the expiations of the law, had respect to the present economy of divine mercy, with its simple outward forms, yet rich internal grace, precisely as the shadow of a thing has respect to its substance and reality. What was the giving of the Commandments on Sinai, but a preparation for the announcement of the gospel? What was the priesthood of Aaron, but an emblem of the eternal priesthood of Christ? What were the sprinklings and ablutions of the temple service, but so many figures of the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost? The Spirit's ministration has come in the room of all that preceded it, and hence it has a glory that exalteth.

Yet this is not the main idea. Christianity has a glory which be-

longed neither to the patriarchal nor the temple service, chiefly and preeminently, because the Spirit is now sent down upon the church, with a fulness and an efficiency such as Abraham and Moses never saw. But the interest of this latter period commenced, not so much with the Saviour's coming into the world, as with his going out of it. His death, rather than his birth, introduced the new economy, and became the grand and opening event to those larger and more wonderful displays of divine grace, which have marked the promulgation of the gospel. This fact is not always remembered. So long as the Saviour lived, the lamb bled at the altar, and the priest sent up his incense. But when he died, these ceremonies had no further efficacy, and they began to decay and vanish away.

Not a little depends on a right view of this one point. It was not so much Christ's advent on earth, nor his remaining here three and thirty years to weep, and toil, and pray; as it was his return to the Father, that formed the great culminating event, so to speak, in the history of the church's dispensations. Hence the value he himself set on his departure. Thus we hear him saying, and saying it, observe, as a topic of consolation to his sorrowful disciples, *It is expedient for you that I go away. Why expedient for them? Let his own language furnish the reply—If I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

You see then the reason of the Apostle's remark. We live under the reign of the Messiah, called, in distinction from all former times and blessings, the *ministration of the Spirit*; and so called, be it never forgotten, because of the rich effusions of mercy which should attend it, and the large accessions to the church, ordained to set off its triumph. How fit therefore that the scenes of Calvary should so soon be followed by the scenes of Pentecost! How suitable that the ignominy of such a cross should lead, in a few days, to the glory of such a conquest! The events of the latter occasion were but the appropriate effects, the predicted results, of the former one. It was really nothing else than taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto men upon a scale large enough, and wonderful enough to excite the admiration of all ages and all worlds, when under the accompanying influences of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles so preached, that three thousand souls were converted in a single day. Well might Jesus bear his sufferings for a reward like this. Well might he be willing to leave his disciples, for the sake of giving the world such a blessing.

All now is plain. We enjoy what Moses hoped for when he prayed, Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children; and what Zerubbabel contemplated, when he exclaimed, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. What they anticipated, we actually possess—

What they saw through a glass darkly, we see face to face. Ours is the glory that excelleth, just as the twilight is excelled by the clear shining of mid-day; or as the teeming harvest, ripe for the sickle, excels the buddings and blossoms of Spring.

1st. Then we ought to be sensible of the *peculiar honor* of the present dispensation.

The lines are fallen to us *in happy times*, as well as *in pleasant places*. Many prophets and wise men desired to see such a day as this, but were never permitted to see it, except by dim and distant expectation. The work of the Spirit, connected as it is with the death of Christ on the cross, and his ascension to the right hand of the Father, is the great life-giving fact, upon which depends whatever of simplicity, and clearness, and power, we have over the Patriarch with his bleeding lamb, and the Jew with his smoking censer. O, shall we ever lose sight of this noble distinction! We live in an interesting period of our world's history. It was not permitted to David, or Isaiah, or Daniel, to witness such blessings. God has given us both the upper and nether springs. We have the mercies of the New Testament superadded to those of the Old.

Let us pause, and reckon up our advantages—Man's exigency required a sanctifier as well as a sacrifice; an influence to renew his nature, as well as an expiation to cancel his guilt; and, blessed be God, we have them both. The power exerted on the thousands at Pentecost, was just as indispensable as the bloody passion on Calvary; and we enjoy the fruits and benefits of the two together. It is our privilege to live in a day, when we can turn from the wonderful scenes which were enacted in the garden, and on the cross, to the scarcely less wonderful scenes of every valley of vision, upon which the Spirit descends to bring bone to its fellow bone, cover them with sinews and flesh, and raise up an army of regenerated men. What would saints of former days have thought of such things? Never was it told in the ears of the worshippers in Jerusalem, that a nation, like that of the Sandwich Islands, had been rescued, in a few years, from the dominion of filth, and ignorance, and lust, and exalted to a place and a name among the Christianized tribes of the earth. They never saw Zion thus lengthening her cords and strengthening her stakes. Ponder this great fact well, and you will no longer wonder that Paul, with the whole map of the church's history before him, should pass over the giving of the law, and the splendor of the shekinah, and fix his eyes upon the *ministration of the Spirit*, as a period of glory with which no former age could compare.

Here we live. Ours is the privilege of seeing the timber for the house of the Lord—not cut down in the mountains of Lebanon, but put up and fitly framed together. We witness—not the digging out and squaring of the stones in the hills of Judea, but the

silent working them into the Temple of Zion. Prophecy has had its fulfilment—shadows have given place to substance. The Spirit of Christ, following the death of Christ, and sealing the benefits of that death upon the hearts of men, characterizes the times in which we live.

2. The existing period of the church demands *spiritual worship, and not pompous external rites.*

We are in danger of forgetting this. Man is a creature of earth and sense, and there is always a tendency in him to rest in forms and symbols of divine things. Thousands of Jews were only Jews outwardly, depending on the letter which killeth, and never feeling the power of the Spirit that giveth life. The pagan adores his god of wood or stone, and fills his temple with costly incense. Catholics address themselves to the imagination, and by associating painting, and sculpture, and music, with the services of religion, seek to establish a dominion over the mind. But, alas! there is one grand defect in all this; it loses sight of the fact that God is a Spirit, and that they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Ours is not the time for a splendid ritual of religion. We do not live in the days of imposing ceremonies.

Why put shadow for substance again? Why suffer imagination to take the place of faith? As men, the world over, come to attach importance to the shape and position of the altar; the vestments of the clergy; the posture of receiving the sacrament; and the days of the saints, real or pretended; they are sure to decline in the spirituality of God's worship. Tell me not that they have senses, and those senses must be impressed. Say not they have a taste, and this taste must be gratified. This is true; but let me ask, is the influence to be exerted on thinking, immortal beings by the truth itself, or by some worldly-wise expedient, which is permitted to usurp its place? This is the question, and see how the great Teacher settles it. His language is, *The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.* We live at this very hour. It is not posture, or form, or ritual, that God looks at. Wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, whether it be like the disciples in an upper room; or the Scottish Covenanters, in glens and caves; or our Puritan ancestors, under the shade of a spreading oak; there the Saviour is in the midst of them.

What more is needed? Why this tendency to go back to the dark ages? Why this hankering after the leeks and onions of modern Egypt? Sure am I that, so far as life, and power, and impressiveness are concerned, I would rather have been one of the little company on the bare deck of the *Speedwell*, when the holy Robinson poured out his heart to God, with Elder Brewer, and Miles Standish, and the rest of the heroic band, kneeling at his side, than worship in the proudest cathedral in the world, notwith-

standing its lofty arches, and painted windows, and deep-toned organ, and gilded crucifix. The soul cannot be fed with mere pomp and parade.

This settles the question. There is no mysterious efficacy in the order, or sacraments of a church, or *the church*—as some are fond of styling their own little enclosure—that can either ensure, or dispense with, the simple, spiritual homage of the heart. Why think there is? Does the Bible encourage any such idea? Turn over its pages, and point me, if you can, to a single verse, which exalts into matters of importance, the externals of religion. Men make much of the day when Christ was born, but do these sacred pages fix the time? They love to delineate his countenance, but is there anything here to aid them in doing so? O, my brethren! we live under the *ministration of the Spirit*, and are not to be occupied with trifles.

3. We are not to look for a *dispensation yet to come, of more pomp and impressiveness.*

The present reign of the Spirit is to close the period of our world's annals. Nothing of more palpable, imposing form, is to come after it; nothing is to take its place; nothing is to intervene between it and the final judgment. My convictions are firm, and I speak with confidence. We need not be told, at this late day, and after all we have seen of the quiet, noiseless progress of truth and righteousness, that *Christ's kingdom is not of this world*. If I read the Bible right at all, the only throne which the Redeemer is ever to set up on earth, is a throne in the heart; and this is to be done, so completely and universally, under the present *ministration of the Spirit*, that all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. He himself is our instructor. We get our lessons in his school.

Other views bring the subject down from its proper eminence. What if the incarnate Son of God should descend from heaven, and take up his abode once more among men, would this be better for a dying world than the *ministration of the Spirit*? His bodily presence could only be in one place at a time. If one nation had him with them, another could not. While in this land he could not be in Europe, or the isles of the sea. But his presence, by the Spirit, in the word and ordinances of his house, can be enjoyed, at one and the same moment, wherever men lift up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. Ah! this is what we want; and having this, we may well be content never to see the Son of man, until he comes to be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe. To be looking, really and speedily, for his personal coming, is to forget where we stand in the history of the church, and under what dispensation we live.

To say nothing of the objections to this scheme, which arise from the fact, that it tends to dry up the fountain of Christian benevolence, and to leave the heathen to perish in their sins, there are

other serious difficulties connected with it. In my mind, it is nothing less than *ending in the flesh*, after having *begun in the Spirit*. It takes me back too far towards the carnal expectations of those Jews, who rejected the Messiah, because his reputed father was a carpenter, and his birthplace might be traced to an inn in Bethlehem.

Far be it from me to dictate to the Master; I am perfectly willing he should pursue his own plan for regenerating and sanctifying the nations; but I can never be unmindful of the divinely attested fact, that we have already a gift, which is far more valuable than the personal presence of the Saviour could possibly be. I would not have him take back his own words, when he says, *It is expedient for you that I go away*. For the world I would not turn off the eyes of men from the *ministration of the Spirit*, to any theory more palpable, or visible, or externally impressive. Living, as we do, in the very midst of the Spirit's reign—that Spirit that was to come in the Redeemer's stead—that Spirit who is the author of all our precious revivals—that Spirit who takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto men—what can we wish or wait for more? It is altogether a retrograde movement to be talking now of a revivable throne, and an imposing ritual. These things belong to another economy. They are part of a dispensation which, long ago, *waxed old and vanished away*.

For myself, I am free to say, I anticipate no such scenes. It is enough for me to have the sceptre of the blessed Jesus swayed over my affections: It is enough for me to share in the joys of his extended and applied gospel. It is enough for me to be favored with the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit. I am willing to wait for a sight of the Son of Man, until he sits on his great white throne, I never expect to hear his voice until he says, Come, ye blessed of my Father, I look for no other dominion than that which he exercises at the right hand of power.

Finally—*In these days, we are encouraged to expect great things for the church of God*.

What followed the Saviour's ascension, at first, was only a prelude to further displays of mercy. God signalized the enthronement of his Son, in the eyes of the universe, by sending down the Spirit, within fifty days, in a measure never before equalled; and this was not more wonderful in itself, than happy in its promise, as the first fruits of a harvest still yet to be fully and gloriously gathered in. The hearing of Christ's first prayer for the gift of the Comforter, was but an antepast to the continued prevalency of his further intercession.

Tell me not that the prospect is dark, and often seems to be growing still darker. I remember what was done in Jerusalem, before the blood of atonement had hardly dried away from Calvary, I remember what has taken place in the spiritual birth of nations, in our own day. Above all, I remember what is written on these

blessed pages. Why give way to despondency? Is it not said, all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God? Are we not told that the glory of the Lord shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea? We want nothing more. We ask for no higher security.

Those who pray for Zion's increase now, come to God in an acceptable time. Much has been done, as there was before the Saviour's advent, in the way of preparation. The field has been explored; languages have been learnt; the path to the heart of heathen kingdoms has been laid open; partial conquests have been made; the army of the living God is in motion. Who can look abroad and not see cheering indications? In this *ministration of the Spirit* we place all our confidence. We ask for nothing else than his new-creating energy. Only let the Spirit be sent down, as Peter saw it, when he charged the murder of the Son of God upon the Jews; and as Paul saw it, when he moved like an angel of mercy from city to city, and from country to country; and the work may be soon accomplished. The babe in your arms may live to see the day, when even China, with her teeming millions, shall welcome the Son of David to his place among her children.

Be not disheartened; the means are at command, and just so soon as the Spirit is poured out like water upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, we shall find the great cause of the world's conversion moving on towards its ultimate triumphs, with an efficacy, and a glory, that will awaken new songs in heaven. Expansion is the very law of the Saviour's kingdom. Judaism had not in it the elements of enlargement. It could never be the religion of the nations. Everything about it was local and temporary—the world could never attend the feasts at Jerusalem. But Christianity embraces every feature of increase and perpetuity; and whenever it shall please God to give the Spirit in primitive fulness and power to all our churches, and all our missionaries, we shall be prepared to hear it shouted on earth, and echoed from heaven, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ!*

Look up then, O believer, and pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit. What, though nearly two thousand years have passed away since the hill of Calvary was wet with atoning blood! What, though darkness still almost covers the earth, and gross darkness the people! What, though three fourths of this world's population are yet ignorant of the Saviour's name! Never give way to despondency. The time is not far off when *Zion shall look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!*