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— Sermons —

THE ROCK-FOUNDATION.

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Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock : and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell not : for it was founded upon a rock.—ST. MATT. vii., 24, 25.

IF there is one cry which, in these days, is heard oftener than any other when men are talking about religion, it is the cry for definiteness. The pulpit, professing to speak for its Master, Christ, calls men to come and be His disciples and join His fellowship, and believe His truth, and obey His precepts. And men answer, "How can we do as you bid us, until we know who are Christ's disciples; and where is His fellowship and what is His truth and His will? One set of teachers make of religion a ceremony, and another an emotion, and others yet a historic memory. There are the Romanists and the Revivalists and the Liberalists—which shall we follow? Whose creed shall we believe? May not you Christians wisely set about finding some common ground of agreement among yourselves before you urge men to come into a fellowship whose conspicuous characteristics are its differences and alienations?"

It is the chief value of such words as I have just read to you, that they lift all such criticisms as these into the clear light of common sense and practical duty. "You want"—it is as though Christ Himself had said it—"some

LIGHT THE OUTCOME OF LIFE.

BY CHARLES H. PARKHURST, D.D., MADISON SQUARE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK.

In Him was life and the life was the light of men.—JOHN I., 4.

In no department of literature in these past twenty-five years has more evident improvement been made than in that of life-writing. It is one thing to collect the events of a man's life and arrange them in the order of years; but a distinct matter, and one involving peculiar tact and appreciation, so to arrange them as to set loose before the reader the real quality of the man and the true genius of his life. The perfection of a biography is not that it relates all that its subject ever did and said, but that with the smallest array of facts possible it gains for us admission into the man's true inwardness. And the biographer's great embarrassment is that the real spirit and inmost quality of a man slip out in so many little quiet ways that are appreciable enough in the interchange of familiar intercourse, but so delicate and intangible as to slip through the meshes of verbal representation. We have all known persons some single gesture of whose hand, expression of countenance, twinkle of the eye, play of the lip, really set free more of the essential flavor of the man than any amount of biographic detail could do. For it is not the man's performances really that we are trying to get at, but something more interior, something that inspired these performances and worked itself out through them. It is not performances that compose life, but life rather that composes performances.

And it is in just this more careful way that the word life gets used in our text: "In Him was life and the life was the light of men." So it was not what He said, did or suffered, that enlightened men and drew them under His power; it was only the glimpses that through His words and works they got of Him. His sermons, miracles, agonies, were only the rifts through which they looked up into Him, and beheld the life, wise, strong and tender, that was in Him. For you know that it is not the rift in the cloud that gives the light. The rift is only the fracture through which the light breaks. And real greatness often and usually declares itself most adequately and effectively in ways that hardly admit of being worded. And it is just here that the biographer's difficulty lies. He is all the time struggling with the sense that this man is more than can be stated, that he is greater than anything he definitely did or said. So every eulogy is necessarily a failure. That is why the same person becomes so frequently the subject of several biographies. To use the phrase we employ in cyphering in division, there is no biography that will go in a life without a remainder. If you attempt to describe a landscape and are anything of a word-painter, you will do it with measurable success. But with the greatest facility in the art possible, there will be a residue that will

elude your best attempt at a description; and it is just the best thing always that will slip out and get left.

If the life-power and the life-meaning were lodged in words definitely spoken and in deeds definitely done, then a man's biography were best composed of the stenographic report of his speeches and the linear gauge of his performance. But life is an inward matter—"In Him was life;" and the influence emanating from life and working in power upon others, is more apt to be like the water that lies in the grass of a summer morning, of which more will dissipate itself in silent evaporation than will trickle down the hillside and sing itself away audibly toward the sea.

There is no life that has been so numerously written as the life of Jesus Christ. Four inspired biographers here tried their hand at it; no two of their biographies alike, and no one of them in the broadest sense a success. It is a most remarkable comment upon Christ that men here never got over writing commentaries upon Him. It is a long matter that never gets spoken to the end when there are so many that are trying to speak. And the difficulty here is in part like that of biography generally. It was not the wisdom of Christ's words, nor the splendor of His works that filled those three years and a half with great event; it was He the life that was in Him; and with all that was stimulating in His discourses, startling in His works of wonder, and harrowing in His sufferings, the life that was in Him would be quite as likely to issue in effects that would be healing, when its creeping forth was a quiet and stealthy one, just as it is the light, not the lightning that best fills the earth with radiance; not the hurricane, but the gentle breath out of the south that stirs air and sea and standing corn into most healthful play, and not the deluge but the rain that drops upon the furrows with most of fertility.

And when we fully feel that the life that was the light of men was something that was in Him, and something, too, that was quite likely to do its best work silently and in a manner to defy record, I think we shall be able to understand some things about Christ and His kingdom in the world that are otherwise a little difficult, and to draw some inferences that will be of value to us, in a way quite practical.

It explains the difficulty we have just noticed in composing any history of those three years that shall be in any manner adequate. It explains how Christ could have founded His kingdom and yet drawn to Him so little of the world's notice while founding it. His working was a silent and stealthy working. He did not ground His kingdom in event but in and upon Himself. I think we must often have felt in reading the Gospels how much there must have been in Christ and in His moulding and renewing and upbuilding influence exercised upon His disciples that has never come to any expression in the Gospels, and never could have come to verbal expression anywhere; quite as we never could find it written in any treatise upon plants all the quiet but potent influences that braid themselves in together so skilfully but so unpretentiously to foster the life that lies back in the germ and unfold it into growth and years and stature.

It has been used as an argument against the Christ of the Gospels that the nations knew nothing about Him. It looks more as though the argument leaned the other way. Here is the kingdom of heaven established, and as we generally interpret facts, the very quietude and noiselessness of its founder is only the proof of a more superlative power. Romulus founded Rome; Rome was a great empire and the world knew something about Romulus. Cyrus founded the Persian empire and records that were contemporary have taken some notice of Cyrus. Alexander established the Graeco-Macedonian Empire and there are in profane annals of the period abundant mention of the son of Philip; but nobody outside of the little dot of land called Palestine knew anything about what Christ so-called was doing. But then here is the kingdom established, and it has got to be explained, stronger than that of Romulus, more intense than that of the Macedonian, and broader than that of Cyrus. Certainly there are no events known to us that are staunch enough to support it. But here is the kingdom established, Christ's kingdom so-called. Something must underlie it. A castle that has stood two thousand years is itself proof positive of foundation, and if the foundation was laid noiselessly like Solomon's temple, in which was heard neither hammer, axe, nor any tool of iron, so much greater the splendor of its founding; for however laid, two thousand years of history put their pressure upon the foundation stone, and the citizens of the kingdom, even their enemies being judges, never had greater occasion to rejoice and glory in its stupendous solidity. Clearly the argument leans the other way. Alexander laid the foundations of his empire in strokes that rung across the continent from the pillars of Hercules to the Indus. But Alexander would have had to be much more than Alexander to have planted his empire in the gentleness and noiselessness with which the Judean founded his kingdom on the banks of the Jordan. The argument leans the other way, and the very quietude with which the empire of the Lord was inaugurated only shows that it was not upon event, but upon a person and upon a life that it was built, and upon what life shall the centuries, the continents, the nations, and the islands of Christianity sustain their pressure if not upon the life of the Son of God?

And then there is another fact explained by certain quiet and necessarily unexplained influence that was incessantly emanating from Christ, and that told upon men more than any startling works of His could have done; and that is the way in which the people about Him, and particularly His enemies seemed, many of them, to be affected toward Him. There is a hint of it in the way in which the multitudes received the Sermon on the Mount. They are not reported as having been much moved by the sermon, but there was something about Him that arrested and riveted their attention, that the Gospel does not quite explain. But cases that are vastly clearer than this are such as His making a whip of small cords and going into the temple and driving out the cattle and the money-changers, upsetting the tables and pouring out the money; and no one seems to have argued with Him, nor to have withstood Him, and the gospel narrative makes no effort to explain it. The

scourge of small cords is no shadow of explanation. There was something in the Lord's eye, or some emanation from Him of resistless sovereignty that the story does not tell, could not tell probably. Then we see in another place that His enemies were afraid to arrest Him. They sent officers for that purpose. They came back without Him. "Why have ye not brought Him?" the Pharisees asked; "Never man spoke like this man;" and the matter dropped there. And then farther on, when they came to the point of arresting Him, they shrank back in a most inexplicable manner from laying hands upon Him, and as the Evangelist says, "went backward and fell to the ground." When we have read the incident I wonder what reason we have assigned to ourselves for behavior so unsoldierly. What sight hindered them, or thought detained, or invisible influence repressed them? If we had not become habituated from childhood to the idea of Judas' suicide I think that it would set us all querying in what way Christ had so worked upon the traitor that death was pleasanter to Him than life with its bad retrospect. The Bible is interesting in what it does say and almost as much so in what it does not. Pilate, in saying: "What I have written, I have written," shows ample evidence of surmises and suspicions that Scripture does not clear up. And the Roman centurion that stood watching Him while He was dying on the cross, from some causes that the story does not make clear, had suggestions started in his mind that were quite un-Roman.

And I think that wherever we read in the Gospel, whether bearing upon the Lord's relation to His enemies or to His friends, we shall continually find results out of all proportion with stated causes, and be put upon reading a great deal between the lines. I am persuaded that we lay too much stress relatively upon those acts and words of the Lord that were so definite that they could be repeated and reported, and vastly too little upon those finer influences that went out from Him, which were too urgent not to be effective, but too subtle to be comprised inside any reporter's record.

Now, while in this I have had it as one object to make us more inquisitive and appreciative readers of the holy story of the working Christ, I have had also another purpose. We have, I am sure, over-estimated the redemptive power of the conspicuous acts of Christ's life and under-estimated the efficacy of the influence that, silent and gentle, was in course of constant emanation from Him. We have forgotten that the life that was the life of the world was primarily not His teaching, His miracles, or His cross, but the life that was in Him. "I am the life." And quite the same mistake we as Christians make about ourselves; for in the measure that Christ has been formed in us, we, too, are the light of the world, as Jesus said upon the mountain, and our life that is the light of the world is the light that is in us. We live in a demonstrative time and in a demonstrative town. It is quite in the spirit of the times to estimate things and men by the figure they will make, to calculate values cubically and rate forces by their capacity of representation, and this idea has stolen into our theories of Christian aggression till a man signifies pretty nearly nothing as an agency of evangelization unless he is doing some

conspicuous and hard work for Christ. I am not antagonizing any most earnest and indefatigable Christian worker that may be among us: there is no quarrel between us. All I want to claim is, that if a man is a Christian, there are no better gospel results wrought in the world than will be wrought by the simple, quiet, every-day shining of his Christian life and light. "Ye are the light of the world," Christ said to His disciples. I have heard that explained as meaning that Christians are to become a light by going about and preaching and exhorting men to holy affections and practices. Well, now, it means nothing of the kind. It does not mean that Christians have got to do something in order to become a light; it means that just because they are Christians they are a light. "Ye are the light," not the great brilliant deeds that you perform, not the great persuasive words that you speak. "Ye are the light." Christians shine without being obliged to go out of their way—without being obliged to put themselves to any pains. It is in the very nature of the case that light should drop off from them as lights fall from a blazing candle. Salt, too, does not go out of its way to be conserving. It is just its nature to conserve. Ye are the salt of the earth. It is the whole drift of this allusion to the light and the salt, lodged as the allusion is in this chapter right in the midst of a discourse that is busy only with the sweetness and purities of the inward life, to teach that the same thing holds of Christian men as holds of Christ, that it is the life, the man himself, in his Christian nature, that is the light of the world. And while the delay of the millenium is certainly due in part to the feeble refulgence of the preachers who shine in a public way on Sunday, it is doubtless due as much to the feeble refulgence of the laymen who shine in a less public way on week-days.

And there are several advantages which you as lay-luminaries have which pulpit-luminaries do not have. A living Christian out among men in daily employment is an incessant fountain of gospel light; that is, if he is a Christian. He preaches all the time. A formal discourse is but for half an hour. A Christian life lived out among men is all of it text, argument and application, and never lets go. When our Sunday service is over, whatever effect may have been produced is most likely evanescent; and when we turn up our faces to be preached to a week hence the service will not find us exactly where to-day leaves us. A sermon does not record itself in fast colors. Nothing is more evaporative than a good impression. But a holy life preaches all the time; it is an incessant sermon. It accumulates effects, and adds results together.

Another advantage our preaching will have will be that it will reach men that never come into the house of God to hear preaching of a more formal kind. There will be just as many Christian pulpits in the street and shop and banking-houses down town to-morrow as there are living Christians down-town to-morrow. The reference is not to talking the Gospel, but the gospel power there is in the simple living of a man that has Christ formed in him. And you will reach a much larger congregation than is gathered here and a much more miscellaneous one, and of which, perhaps, not a tenth hear the Gospel

preached in a formal way. You have in this respect eminent advantage. Ye are the light of the world. Ye are the salt of the earth. Suppose you have twenty unconverted men in your employ. You are a Christian. It is safe to assume that the twenty are becoming inclined towards Christianity under the pressure of the mellowing and subduing quality of your Christianity. I go to a man and ask him if he will take a class in the Sunday-school or Mission-school. He pleads secular pressure of duty and very likely the plea is an adequate one. But has it occurred to him that by arrangement of Providence his unconverted employees or companions are to all intents and purposes a mission-class held six days out of seven, under the discipline of his gospel living?

"Down town is a busy place to think of injecting into business hours gospel aims and influences." I know; but did you never think of it, that the light that is run up on the mast-head of a steamer never has to stop to shine? Did it never occur to you that the exceeding velocity with which the sun moves never interferes with its refugence? It would be a sickly sort of luminary that would have to stop in order to shine. A Christian ought rather to be in that respect like a fire-fly that lightens most just when it is on the wing.

The simple living of the lay-Christian has this advantage, too, that his preaching is unprofessional preaching. There is little likelihood that his piety will be discounted. There are certain aspects of ministerial life that are liable to put men upon thinking about the clergy a little in the vein in which Satan thought about the man of Uz, when he asked, "Doth Job serve God for nought?" I confess to you frankly that there is to me something a little awkward about this. Christ had not where to lay His head. Paul was content with food and clothing. The present adjustment may be quite right, but it is certainly the case that more would be accomplished for men in the direction of salvation if they were quite sure that everything done clerically for souls was done with a pure and untarnished desire to save souls. I only mention this to show the advantage in which a lay-Christian is set in this particular. The unconverted man who comes under the discipline of your simple uncompensated example will feel no impulse to make that example mean less by deduction and subtraction. As things are now, there is nothing that can quite compare for power with piety and preaching that have about them no taint of the professional.

I mention only one other advantage that you have as preachers and that is that in the gospel life of a layman practicing and preaching do not get divorced. The two are naturally in wedlock. In Christ the two never fell asunder. Preaching may be practical, preaching may be about life, and yet be just far enough from life to disclose a cleavage. "Cheap as preaching," has become a proverb. Between you and those to whom your Christian living addresses itself preachingly, there is no such unlikeness of temptations and pursuits as to make your holy living seem to them in the least degree unreal or impracticable. The principles by which you profess to live tell upon them with a power redoubled by your own witnessed observance of those principles.

There is no discourse on honesty so pungent as to do honestly. Dishonesty would soon become infamous in New York if every man that professes to be a Christian would simply observe the eighth Commandment.

The power of the Church is really, then, in the pew, not in the pulpit. And now, as we go into our place of prayer for a few moments—some of us—I want each to make serious with the question whether there is in him any of the life which is the light of the world; whether in the midst of the unsanctity and irreligion that prevails, he is a light shining in a dark place, a living gospel open to the perusal of every eye, a living epistle known and read of all men.

DEDICATORY SERVICE.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN HIS TEMPLE.

BY WILLIAM ROBERTS, D.D., MORIAH WELSH CHURCH, UTICA, N. Y.

The Lord is in His holy temple: Let all the earth keep silence before Him.—HAB. ii., 20.

THIS important subject suggests four particulars: Consecration, Adoration, Expectation and Communion.

I. The Presence of God in His Temple forms the grand element of its Consecration. This consecration implies:

First, that there are subordinate elements in the dedication or the setting apart of it as the house of God. "This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of Heaven." We find in Holy Writ that King Solomon, the officers and members of the Jewish Church, dedicated the temple in Jerusalem by the words of God's covenant, by prayer and praise. The officers and members of this Church have solemnly consecrated this edifice as the house of God. It is sanctified by the Word of God, prayer and praise, independent of all other ceremonies. This was considered sufficient in the order of its dedication.

Secondly: During the dedication we are to look and wait for demonstrations of the Divine Presence therein. In the Scriptural record of the consecration of Solomon's Temple we find "that the cloud" (probably the cloud which led the children of Israel through the Wilderness) "filled the house of the Lord; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." This, however, was a visible and special token of the Divine presence suited to the auspicious event. Moreover, there were five permanent symbols of God's presence in the temple: 1. The Shekinah. 2. The Ark and Mercy-Seat. 3. The Urim and Thummim. 4. Fire from Heaven. 5. The Spirit of Prophecy. These symbols, however, were only "shadows of good things to come" in the spiritual temple, or the Church under the New Testament. Here we have the real presence of God through His Spirit, the substance of the