



THE NEW YORK  
OBSERVER

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1910.

## My Evening Prayer.

By C. MAUD BATTERSBY.

If I have wounded any soul to-day,  
If I have caused one foot to go astray,  
If I have walked in my own willful way—  
Good Lord, forgive.

If I have uttered idle words or vain,  
If I have turned aside from want or pain,  
Lest I myself should suffer through the strain—  
Good Lord, forgive.

If I have craved for joys that are not mine,  
If I have let my wayward heart repine,  
Dwelling on things of earth, not things divine—  
Good Lord, forgive.

If I have been perverse, or hard, or cold,  
If I have longed for shelter in thy fold  
When Thou hast given me some part to hold—  
Good Lord, forgive.

Forgive the sins I have confessed to thee,  
Forgive the secret sins I do not see,  
That which I knew not, Father, teach Thou me—  
Help me to live.

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## CALVARY'S CROSS.

By John E. Hurlbut.

On Calvary's Cross 'tis love I see,  
The love my Father had for me;  
A love that made with death fierce strife  
And won for me eternal life.

On Calvary's Cross 'tis love I see,  
The love my Saviour had for me,  
Christ crucified by hellish sin  
Did by that conflict Heaven win.

On Calvary's Cross 'tis love I see,  
God's love in Christ so full and free  
That every race in every land  
May for themselves this love command.

On Calvary's Cross 'tis love I see,  
The Spirit brings that love to me  
And breaks my heart, then makes it new,  
God's life and love in Christ, mine too.

Wapping, Conn.

## THE FLOODS IN PARIS.

From Our Own Correspondent.

ALL of our readers know, from the public prints, of the rising of the River Seine and the floods in Paris. A former correspondent of The Observer, who has been for the past ten years a resident of Paris, sends us some graphic sketches of the situation, as follows:

"The one interest now is the flood; we live by the hour, but, as you know, our house is on such high ground that it would have to be a terrible flood, like the Biblical one, to reach us. However, the water is not our only danger, for food will soon be beyond price, unless the railways get in working order, and we can procure viands from the usual sources.

"I have been very thankful that we have been spared so far the worst of the inconvenience, discomfort and danger. Although my husband's business office stands above the danger line, all about and below is in a frightful state, for the underground railway was in process of constructing a new branch there, and the water got into it from the other lines near the river and rose up and up, till now all the open spaces in front of the Gare St. Lazare are one sea of water, and the sewers and pipes keep bursting in every direction.

"The city, as it is now, is the most extraordinary sight one can imagine. Our quarter is the only one where social life can go on at all, and even here it is hampered, for people who have electric lights cannot use them and now the "essence" for the motor cars has given out, so they cannot get about. All tramways are shut down and only our branch of the underground runs. The future, I fear, will be a terrible mess, for there is sure to be illness later on.

"I have only been in personal danger once, and that was only danger of separation from my home. I went over to the Bon Marché, not realizing that things had grown so serious in the St. Germain quarter. On the way back we tried three streets before we found a passable one, and just as we were nearly through the pipes burst in the Rue de Lille and flooded the Rue de Bac. The police immediately formed a cordon and let no one pass, and we were among the last allowed over that evening. We really owed it to my "cocher" that we got across, for he knows all the important police officers. So, I just sat still and let him arrange the affair, and after being detained and turned here and there, we were finally passed over the Quai Voltaire along with a few

others. I had my maid with me and should have gone to "Trinity Lodge" or the "Girls' Home," of both of which I am a member, and there I could have been safe and warm over night, but I am glad that I did not have to. Now I do not venture far from home, and am thankful for dry floors and good food.

"The gentlemen go everywhere; many of their dynamos are under water, for, of course, most electrical works are near rivers. They go to Versailles over water-covered rails and wherever the flood goes, and come home full of weird tales and sights. The sense of danger does not seem to enter into their minds. Some social pleasures continue. To-day I have a lunch in the Rue Chaillot and next week two dinners, both of which are up here on the high ground. All the other people have already sent around and canceled their invitations, and many nice companies are broken up. I am sorry for these disappointments, but much more sorry for the small medium class who had tiny homes near Paris and a few violet beds or a pet lot of hens and a few animals, and choice furniture and a picture or two. All these people will lose the savings of years, and it can never be made up to them. I think how I love my old heirlooms and home treasures and can imagine their distress at seeing their furniture spoiled by water and, in many cases, floating down the stream!

"When this will reach New York I cannot tell, for all our system of posts and railways is out of order because of the floods. But the government is doing its best, and probably will find a way out of our Venetian city. The situation to-day (January 27) is no better, and a little worse than yesterday; but as yet there is no panic. Food is higher, and fuel is damp, and water is dirty, and many streets are impassable and traffic is halted, but life goes on. Church bells ring and theaters give performances, and even skating rinks are crowded. Calls and teas are tied up, and dinners and lunches and social festivities are not planned ahead, as it is so difficult to procure enough food for one's own family without arranging the feasts. I also feel it quite wrong to have banquets when so many are starving at our doors in consequence of this disaster.

"The French are very good at a time like this. Their light-hearted nature serves them well. They laugh as they climb from windows into boats, with all their belongings floating in their homes behind them. They eat what they can get. They drink dirty water and sour wine, and never think of disease. It is a strange volatile nature, without depth or serious side, but it helps them over awful trials and makes their lives, even at the worst, a kind of play of chance. The men of the lower classes are very brave and spare no strength to save and help their friends and neighbors. There is no need to ask them to help; all are hard at work; one must admire them."

Further advices give the encouraging news that the flood has subsided; and that the Government, aided by private liberality from all the countries of Europe and the United States, are using every effort to repair damages, to forestall epidemics and to relieve distress and poverty. The rainbow already begins to shine again over Paris.

Augustus

"The measure of time is in things done, rather than in days counted."—Exchange.

# Present-Day Life as Live Preachers See It

## MAN'S NATURAL AVERSION TO GOD'S HOLINESS.

By the Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.—Luke v: 8.

PETER was both drawn to the Lord and repelled by Him. Goodness is with us all both attractive and repulsive. The Lord's revealed character made Peter uncomfortable. A moth flutters around the blazing candle, but is singed by it. That is the human soul's situation. The soul is the moth; flutters toward the blaze but dreads it.

The earth is pulled toward the sun by gravity, but never falls into the sun, because there is another impulse working upon it tending all the time to carry it away from the sun. It is therefore unable either to drift off into infinite space, as it would like to do, or to return and be wrapped up in the sun, as it probably once was, as it would also like to do. The earth therefore simply goes round and round, which is well enough for a planet, but less satisfactory to a moth or a man.

Superiority of any kind is always illuminating. It sheds a light which reveals itself, but a light also which discovers whatever stands in its track and makes conspicuous whatever is inferior and shows how inferior it is. All of which is disconcerting to the inferior. We like to be known for as much as we are and for more if possible. A vocalist prefers not to sing upon a stage where a finer singer also sings. So of an orator or a preacher. We never object to contrasts if it is ourselves that are going to gain by the contrast. An actor enjoys being the star performer, and, I am told, likes to have the quality of those associated with him kept well down so that the discrepancy between his genius and their's may redound to his advantage. Why even many a gathering for prayer has been spoiled by the introductory prayer having been offered by one who had the gift of prayer. That set a standard that the other devout souls felt that they could not come up to and therefore confined themselves to silent prayer. And the more cultivated a man is in other lines, the more it pains him to appear to disadvantage in his acts of supplication. Consequently it is much more difficult to maintain prayer-meetings among extraordinary people than among people that are common-place. No Christian, of course, is afraid to pray in his closet, because there is no one there to hear him except God, and it is a strange thing that God is less embarrassing to us than any one else. We should like to inquire just here why that is so, were it not that it would lead us too far from the main line of thought that we are pursuing this morning.

All these illustrations have made plain enough this simple principle, or fact perhaps we might better call it, that the finer a thing is if it is finer than we are the more reluctant we are to come so close to it as to be made to realize how great is the discrepancy that exists between it and ourselves. It is this fact taken over on to moral and religious ground that made Peter unhappy, as related in our passage from St. Luke. What had just occurred had made such disclosure to him of the character of his Divine Master as beautifully, yes, daz-

zingly, illustrated the Master, but that for that very reason showed to Peter under melancholy form the portrait of his own character. The moth was touched by the flame and fluttered off with a scorched wing.

This does not mean that we do not admire superiority. We all admire it. However ignorant we are we feel to eulogize



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the wise man, and the wiser he is the more eulogistic the thought we entertain in regard to him. The inferior vocalist mentioned a moment ago cherishes in her heart silent applause for the prima donna, but does not care to come too close to her and especially prefers not to sing alongside of her. What is true of the sage and the artist holds also of a man in his moral character. We all render distant plaudits to saintly people, to people that are holier than we, more generous, sweet and gentle than we. No person among us or anywhere else, if only he be possessed of delicate appreciation, would be slow to pay tribute to the beauty of the character of Jesus Christ; but so soon as that character is pressed home upon us in a way that makes us feel its beauty and at the same time makes us sensible of the blemishes that are upon our own, there begins to grow up in us a feeling of uneasiness; and we become uncomfortably aware that to admire what is fine is not the same thing as to be fine ourselves.

It was a serious mistake that I once made when I said from the pulpit that a man is known by his admirations. He is not known by his admirations; if he were we should all be admirable, for we all admire what is admirable. We can admire a painting but that is no sign that we are an artist. Our souls can expatiate over the splendor of the night sky, but that does not put us up among the stars.

It is probable that the eulogies that we publicly pronounce upon great men and great Christians would conduce to larger advantage to ourselves and to one another if instead of looking upon them with that

kind of telescopic regard which makes distant and therefore inaccessible orbs of them, we would view them as objects that are close by, lying within the range of ordinary human possibility, so that while we should derive from our contemplation of them that enjoyment that always comes from beholding what is fine, we should also derive from that contemplation the inward disquiet that is likewise bound to result when a phenomenally fine thing comes to such an immediate touch with ourselves that we cannot help making comparisons between it and ourselves, thereby creating in us much the feeling that a singed moth may be supposed to have when fluttering around a hot blaze.

When we contemplate them as stars hanging in our historic firmament, that is treating them as a kind of celestial ornamentation, leaving to us simply the pleasure of basking in their redundant effulgence, without taking from them that personal admonition and rebuke which ought to reach us from them, and which certainly will reach us when we let them come so close to our thought that there will be no escape from letting them become a standard against which to measure ourselves.

Now this process of measuring ourselves against superiority is distasteful. We dislike to feel ourselves convicted of inferiority. And that accounts for a good deal of current religious deficiency. In the series of discourses that I am at present delivering we are trying to discover why it is that that religious tendency that we bring with us into the world develops by a process that is so slow and so languid. And this is part of the reason. We are perfectly willing, all of us, to contemplate the Divine, as it is revealed to us in Christ, provided nothing more is asked of us than to look upon Christ as a kind of distant orb hung in the spiritual sky, dispensing warmth, light and beauty down the track of the last nineteen hundred years, but sparing us all necessity of any personal touch, any directness of relation between Him and ourselves, and acquitting us therefore of the inconvenience of treating Him as the personal ideal up against which we are consciously to stand and be accurately measured.

Now it would not be safe and probably not be just to say that there is no honest agnosticism in the world and no honest atheism or infidelity. There appear to be some who would like to have such a sense of the reality of God and of their personal relation to Him as they do not have, and as they do not seem able to gain. So there are people who are blind, who would like to see, but feel themselves denied the privilege and possibility of vision. But I believe that not many people are born blind. It is usually an acquired infirmity. To see is natural. Not to be able to see is against nature. If they cannot see, and if the beautiful faces of those who love them are concealed from them, and the charms of the world around and the glory of the sky above are to them an unappreciated reality, it is because something has happened to them since that first moment of infancy when, even while their eyes were still closed, the light perforated their shut eyelids and the world was

\*For a sketch of Dr. Parkhurst, see The Observer of February 3.

sunny to them even before they realized that it was sunny.

Now as we have already seen in previous meditations, a glimmering vision of God is as natural to the soul when it enters the world as a shaded view of the surrounding world is natural to the little child. And it is prudent to say that if the native tendency of the soul toward God were allowed the same unobstructed course as is guaranteed to that incipient power of physical vision with which the infant comes into the world endowed, there would be no greater number of grown men and women that are religiously blind or that are even religiously near-sighted than there is of people who are destitute of the bodily sense of sight.

But the fact in the case is that that native tendency of the soul toward God is not allowed an unobstructed course. The tendency is interfered with. The celestial light beams upon that tendency just as the sun's light beams upon the infant's quivering eyelid. But deliberately men hold that tendency out of reach of the celestial light and the vision of the spiritual eye becomes darkened just as that of the bodily eye becomes enfeebled when kept where there is no light to irradiate it.

And, as just said, it is with cool deliberation that men hold the possibilities of spiritual vision out of reach of the celestial light. God is a being whom by nature men do not like. To modify that last expression a little, they do like Him, but only as they like the sun, which is an object that is exceedingly opportune, renders a great variety of comfortable ministries, makes things grow, puts enough light into the world so that men do not have to go around with lanterns, and warms the air so that we are obliged to have furnace fires only a part of the year—in brief, is a tremendous astronomical convenience, but when it comes along toward the middle of the day and the solar ray has become intense we draw the curtain or swing to the shutters, out of preference to live in an atmosphere that is saturated with a light that is more mellow and less trying to the eye.

Which is what men do with the light that is celestial—they curtain it out, that is to say, they curtain out the most luminous part of it. It hurts to look directly upon the noon sun, and we never do except when we are watching an eclipse, and then we make use of glass that is smoked. And it hurts in something the same way to look directly toward the face of God if we look with a vision that is unmasked. And it hurts because in coming before Him in that direct and close way, and looking upon Him not as a distant though convenient utility, but rather as a Being whose presence is with us in all its fulness of purity and holiness, the realization of what He is carries with it and draws along after it the realization of what we are.

And we do not like to know what we are, or even if we know we object to being reminded of it. It is like the case of a schoolboy who is learning to write. He finds it pleasanter to look at the last line that he inscribed himself than to glance up to the copy set for him at the top of the page. The first lets him suppose that he is becoming a finished penman; the last makes him realize that he has not even acquired the elementary principles of penmanship.

We all like to think well of ourselves, which we are not very well able to do when we measure ourselves against the perfect ideal, and so we resort to the same subterfuge as the schoolboy and compute

from a standard that is not ideal, although all the time aware that the trick is an evasive and cowardly one. In our self-valuation we adopt as criterion the current average of character as it is evinced in those around us, disposed, however, in the interest of maintaining a credit balance, to reckon, as basis of estimate, from types of character that are sufficiently under our own to allow a little margin for self-congratulation. There is nothing pleasanter than to be able to look down, even though unable to look far.

To Peter, in the circumstances where our chapter from Luke describes him, looking up was the only thing possible and that was the secret of his disquiet. Himself and Christ were to him for the moment the only beings in the world and he wished Him away. "Depart from me." He was sorry there was a Christ. The ordinary associations of life were tolerable enough and congenial, for they reminded him of nothing that it was unpleasant to think about. Perhaps some of his comrades were of a type sufficiently under his own to give him that feeling of superiority which makes it pleasanter to be king of dogs than dog to a king.

Peter might have liked his Master with that Master away, but not when He was close by and with nothing between the two that would serve the purpose of a shelter or moral breakwater. A dwarf will admire a giant seen a couple of blocks off, but declines to walk the street with him. Also Peter might have perused without repulsion and even with a degree of satisfaction a written delineation of just such features of character as appeared in Christ. But in a book or moral essay there is not much that is personal. A book is not electric. For practical effects there is not a great deal in it but what the reader himself puts into it. There are very few biographical sketches that leave the reader beyond the point where they found him.

But in the incident of our chapter it was not a written or printed Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John that he was looking into, but the veritable and personal original, with nothing to reduce the pressure, nothing to ease the force, that came from having the great soul of the Son of God touch his little soul—that came from having to look upon his own soiled heart in the presence of perfect holiness. And of course the wretched moth felt its wings burnt and fluttered. Peter's thought was, and practically what he said was, "I want to have nothing to do with You."

And that is where the process of getting away from God begins. Disbelieving in God begins in not liking God, a dislike produced by the contrast between His holiness and our unholiness and which sends us off from Him in the same way that the hot candle drives the burnt moth back into the dark.

Which you will recognize as being the same thing, only in different form, as what St. Paul says in this letter to the Romans where, having stated that men's natural attitude toward God is one of close approach to Him, goes on to say that they became separated from Him, not because they had reasoned it out by a severe course of logic that there is no God or that He is unknowable, or inaccessible, but because—and I quote his words—because they "did not like to retain Him in their knowledge," know Him, but unlearned Him, because they disliked Him so much that they preferred not to continue to know Him. The same is told by Christ when He says, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the

world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." "Hateth the light" is a rather strong expression. For Christ to say that a man hates the light is to say that he hates God, who is the light. And that is what He desires to be understood as saying. A very intense and tremendous way of putting the matter. "Hate" is severer than "dislike," which is as searching a word as any human preacher would venture to use unless he had scriptural authority in his support.

Now if the entire character of God were summed up in the word "affection" there would be no agnostics and no atheists, for as is implied in the words just quoted from Christ, dimness or blindness of the religious eye is not a matter of the brain but of the heart, and means not philosophical inability but moral unwillingness. If then the entire personality of God could be told in the word "affection"—a divine disposition to love men with no other considerations coming into the account—men would move forward into the knowledge of God and into confident fellowship with Him as naturally as they move toward any other person or thing that is all attraction with no ingredients of repulsion.

But unfortunately for that, He is as holy as He is affectionate, and while a man with an unclean heart loves the affectionateness he hates the holiness, and there is no such thing as coming near to God and entering into the relations of personal acquaintanceship with Him unless we approach Him in the wholeness of His character, affection, holiness and all. A man may kneel and pray, employing the very finest terms of devout phraseology, basking in a languishing way in the warmth of God's loving-kindness, but he knows, you know, and I know, that he does not get anywhere if in his supplication he is not prepared to face God in His purity as well as in His tenderness. He knows and feels that prayer is a farce, that it does not touch nor reach beyond the ground on which he kneels if he is consciously holding and cherishing in his life that which divine perfection prohibits. That is the genius of atheism and of agnosticism and of general religious "don't know," and of religion that has no strength and comfort in it—the human moth fluttering around the pure white light of the candle.

All of which you probably know, all of you, just as well before you heard me say it as you do now. The purpose of preaching is not to tell people something new but to uncover to them something that is already in their heart but that they have covered up, because less troublesome when pushed off into a dark corner than when lying out in plain sight.

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#### MEETING OF PRESBYTERY.

##### Westchester

The Presbytery of Westchester held an intermediate meeting in New York, January 18. The Rev. Benjamin F. Parli-man was received from the Presbytery of Nassau and the Rev. Alfred Ray Atwood from the Norfolk Association of Congregational Ministers. Arrangements were made for the installation of the latter over the Patterson, (N. Y.) Church. The Rev. Edwin P. Essick was dismissed to the Presbytery of Clarion. It was decided not to appoint an executive commission. A minute on the late George and Mary Mead Cornwell, missionaries at Chefoo, China, were read.