

"How old art thou?" Gen. 47:8

This ^{is} was a question which Pharaoh put to Jacob, and which Jacob ^{although somewhat sadly} promptly answered. He was 130 years old; but he did not say so in these ^{few} words: - this was the way he put it: "the days of the years of my pilgrimage ^{are an} ~~and are~~ 130 years - few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." Thus he ~~seems~~ seems not to have reckoned the time he had lived, by years, so much as by ^{the} days, that composed those larger periods. ^{of there he} ~~he~~ had ^{about} ~~thus~~ lived ⁵⁰⁰ ~~47,455~~ ^{and more} days; so often had he seen the sun rise and set; so many steps had he taken in the ^{"pilgrimage"} ~~journey~~, which had been to him ^{at once so tiresome and} so eventful. - ~~in the~~ ^{in the} pilgrimage. Yet, although so many, they now seemed to be "few" - and not only few, but "evil," he adds, as if ~~thus~~ he would account for their fewness. / Had the evil - i. e.

^{i.e.} the sorrow - been less, the days ^{might} ~~would~~ have been more.

● A lighter burden, would have left ^{him} ~~him~~ his vigor ^{for} a longer journey greater. | As it was, he was compelled to succumb to the inevitable doom of all, and go down to the grave younger than his fathers had been: - for, although he lived 17 years longer, his history was, ^{already written} ~~done~~ - what he had been brought into the world to do was now done, and its record made up - the pilgrim's staff was about broken.

Let me now place in connection with ~~the~~ question that Pharaoh asked another which an inspired apostle asks: "What is your life?" To which he himself replies: "It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." Substantially, the two questions are the same, and so are the two answers. At any rate they have the same moral significance. They measure the

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Wilmington - 1878

Lowville (at assembly)

Richmond - Grace st } Presbyⁿ ch. Jan 3/97
Dr. Fair's }

ourselves, one day he. / I ~~should~~ ^{could wish} to have a view
 of the angels who gather about the great central
 throne - but they do not interest my thoughts nearly
 so deeply as do the men and women who there have
 upon them the light of God: for these are of my own
sort - of my own kindred: - so that when I perceive
them my soul receives the thrill of a direct personal
 interest. / And it is from gazing upon those who, out
 of earth's ^{Such as I am familiar with,} ~~homes~~ ^{and towns,} are there pouring forth
 the radiances of their glory and the raptures of their
 songs, that I am ready to search for Him who
 is lifted them thither; to lay at His feet the tribute
 of my gratitude for that ^{power of} ~~same~~ love which, having
 saved them, is prepared to save me, ~~at~~ likewise.

What activity was that of Noah as he prepared to
 conquer, by his faith, the horrors of the flood!
 - was that of Abraham, as, with begirt loins, he sought,
 through toil and sacrifice, a heavenly country! - was
 that of Moses, as he multiplied, through a most
 eventful life, evidences of his paramount "esteem for
 the reproach of Christ" in preference to the treasures
 of Egypt! - was that of those indomitable Judges,
 of whom Gideon and Samson were samples, ^{at God's command,} as ^{they}
 ruled ~~pass~~ perverse Israel during long years of
 flaming ~~fiery~~ trial! - was that of them all, who, "through faith
 subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped
 the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire,
 out of weakness were made strong, turned ^{armies,} ~~armies~~
 to flight" - living so far superior to the men
 around them, as to justify the word that "the world

was not worthy of them." | Surely it is matter for
 wonder - the ^{extraordinary} results thus ascribed to the exploits of
 faith! | But what is expected from the operation
 of this same principle in our own times, and in the
 case of every believer, is hardly less surprising; ^{is, indeed, substantially the same.} There
 are, in Scripture, 3 energetic and restless agents, to
 which we are pointed, ^{as enemies to} ~~against~~ ^{to} be fought with
 and to be conquered, ^{mainly} by its power. | ^{of the 3.} The "world" is one.
 By this is meant those plaudits, those fashions, those
 excesses, those selfish maxims, those empty gazettes,
 which seem to mould the opinions and direct the
 practises of the generality of mankind; ~~and~~ ^{and} which,
 taken together, ^{express} ~~constitute~~ the spirit that rules the
 great mass of ^{over} ~~the~~ race: a spirit that plunges it
 into the abysses of a dark ungodliness, where
^{only} the present, the tangible, the earthly, evermore

outweigh and eclipse the future, the ^{insensible,} ~~unseen,~~ the hea-
 venly. | Now, who can measure the intense, the subtle,
 activity of a prevailing worldliness? | It is always
 near. | It is always pressing. | No feet are swift enough
 to outstrip it. | No hiding is close enough to shut it out.
 No caution is circumspect enough to wade it. | It
 busies countless hands in ^{constructing and} spreading ~~the~~ nets of entangle-
 ment. | It employs eloquence, science, literature,
 policy, business, pleasure - every agent which, although
 perhaps good in itself, ~~can~~ shall impress ^{some} evil upon the
 soul. | Influences seem to pervade the very air we
 breathe, that all the while are laying some touch of
 paralysis upon our persons, to detain us amid the
 things of time and prevent our rising to the things
 of eternity. | Who is it, accordingly, that has not
 felt this manifold agency of the worldly mind,

as, in one or more of its innumerable ^{methods} ~~forms~~ of operation,
 it has laid its grasp upon him, when he has least
 expected its presence? | And all the more powerful is
 it, because having, in each one's own heart, ^{that} ~~a~~ ^{sympathy} ~~welcome~~
^{which} ~~that~~ is always so ready to ^{go out upon it with a} ~~give it a~~ ^{kindly look} ~~friendly~~ and a
 friendly welcome! || But it is this very principle,
 so adroit, so hindering, so crippling, so ^{down} ~~over~~ ^{beaming} at
 times, which ^{in lebruit} ~~is of commission to meet~~ - as
 a still stronger counter-principle - ^{is commissioned to meet, and silence} ~~and to subdue,~~
 For what does He tell us who is better acquainted with
 this formidable ^{enemy} ~~foe~~ than are we, and who has arranged
 for its ^{overthrow?} ~~conquest~~ - "This is the victory that overcometh
 the world, even ^{your} ~~our~~ ^{faith}." | Is the world an active
 foe? Faith excels it in activity. | Does the swift
 spirit of ^{temptation} ~~sin~~ run to its work with ^{nimble} ~~nimble~~ zeal -
 the swifter spirit of faith overtakes and surpasses it.

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Yes - the tie that binds us to Jesus Christ is of
better steel than that which binds us to the world.
Faith, by enabling ~~the believer~~ ^{its possessor} to mount up to heaven,
secures him from the baits and snares which attend
him on earth. Homer tells us that Ulysses caused
himself to be bound to the mast of the ship, and
every one of his follower's ears to be stopped with
wax, that they might not hearken to the songs of
the Sirens, and so be drowned in the treacherous sea.
Faith fastens the soul to Christ, and so ravishes its ears
with the glad tidings of pardon, and peace, and
eternal life, as to deafen it to the murmur of the
world. | In the midst of a tumultuous ocean, the points
of the compass remain unmoveable, because they govern
themselves, not according to the changeable winds,
but according to the influence of the heavens; and

the faith of the faithful remains firm amid the agitations
which they must needs encounter here below,
~~of the world,~~ because it governs itself not according
to the instability of the affairs of this world, but according
to the promises of God which are for all eternity.

plan of God's saving mercy, upon whose shame-
-loaded heads rests the cloud of their ^{Lord's disap-}~~pointment~~
-pointment - to whom His gracious gospel was sent
in vain - and now to be transplanted into a world

Yes - the tie that binds us to Jesus Christ, is even of
 better steel than that which binds us to the world: and
 being ^{thus} bound to Him, we partake of His omnipotence
 and wisdom, as ^{He pours forth} it ~~flows out of~~ His life into our own.
 But, then,
 Again, there is "the flesh," in addition to the world:
 a foe still closer to us. | By this is meant our "natural
 man" - with which we were born, and which carries
 in its veins the inherited ungodliness ^{that has been} derived from the
 fatal fall; ~~enlarged~~ ^{- this confirmed} and fortified by untold ^{personal} ~~actual~~
 transgressions: a mighty, a ^{an experienced,} ~~force~~ controlling, and - by any
^{unaided} efforts of our own. ~~unaided from above~~; - ^{an} ~~an~~ inextri-
 -quishable, principle of indwelling evil, which goes
 and comes with our very breath: a proneness to
 do wrong which is as steady as the pulsations
 of our blood, ^{and which binds} ~~binding~~ us evermore towards the
 earth, despite the strongest will and the angriest
 conscience.

All this is felt, not alone by the man who has never
 tried after a better heart than nature gave him
 - but ^{by} the sturdiest and most advanced Christian.
 The great apostle ~~mourned~~ ^{mourned} over it, as one of its vic-
 tims, which not even his native vigor and constancy
 of soul could master. | It is the seductive "flesh"
 which goes with ~~us~~ ^{the man of God} into all the scenes and through
 all the hours of life; cooling his love for the Saviour,
 drawing off his benevolence from his fellow-men,
 and embarrassing every movement of his regenerated
 nature: often, indeed, bringing him into the captivity
 of hateful and distressing sin. | It is that ^{sinful} ~~sinful~~
ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ the house of the soul, who is forever laying
 treacherous snares for it - who is at every door and
 window inviting and soliciting the entrance of
 each passing evil - who is always striving to

lift to the very throne of the heart some enemy
 which may usurp the royalty of its ^{rightful King,} ~~time Lord~~.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver
 me from the body of this death!" | Goder is the
 only person who can do it! = "I thank God through
 Jesus Xt. our Lord." | Faith - the faith that summons
 Him within the soul - that clings to His righteousness
 - that substitutes Him for self - that gives into His
 hands the government of the will - that stretches
 itself over His atoning cross - that strengthens it -
 - self upon His promised gift of the Holy Ghost -
 such a faith, kindling the eyes with the light
 of heaven which He has ^{sent - being} brought - that blessed
 Sun_n whose beams no darkness can exist - before
 whose drawing power no obstacles can stand
 = the faith_n ^{I say,} that makes Him its refuge and its all,

- will have found a helper ^{against whom} ~~that~~ men "the flesh" cannot long hold out. | It is a faith that enables the soul to sense the "law of God"; that gradually impresses its ^{a divine} ~~character~~ signature upon all the faculties; that, one by one, erases the now inferior "law of sin" - in a word that "purifies the heart" by dropping upon it the blood which clarifies wherever it touches.

But, added to the world and the flesh, is the "Devil". | Yet, what of ^{him} ~~him~~? | Does he go about - an adversary - a lion - seeking whom he may devour? | Well - he ^{does} devour many a wretched soul. | What, however, is the ~~advice~~ counsel of Scripture to such as believe in the law of God?

"Whom resist, steadfast in the faith!" - and, being thus resisted, the promise is, he will fly from you.

He can ^{boldly face} ~~conquer~~ every ^{opponent} ~~opposing~~ except this one.

The shield which bears upon its ample space the word of God, has a gleam which darts dismay even into the heart of Satan. | I have read of battles wherein ~~some~~ ^{the} stronger and more courageous warriors, having lost every other means of ^{defence} ~~protection~~, have ^{snatched} ~~lifted~~ from the ground their ^{dying} ~~dead~~ comrades, and, holding these in their arms, have ^{sheltered} ~~sheltered~~ their own lives from ^{the onset of the} ~~the~~ baffled foe. | So, let the believer take to himself, by the hand of his faith, his ^{dying Lord} ~~Crucified~~ and interposing Him for a protection, ^{- the archenemy} ~~no part~~ of his soul may ^{now} ~~be~~ wound him indeed but cannot kill - and, by and by, frustrated by a panoply so complete, will retire from ~~he will make off altogether out of sight of that~~ ~~and~~ the unequal combat.

Lacotte

Who, then, will measure the activity and vigor of Christian faith? Does not our Lord say: "All things are possible to him that believes". It dares to ~~meet~~ ^{attempt}, with cheerful confidence, ~~every~~ possibility all that God has given it to do. | It is that which, best of all, enables the soul, by the force of a superhuman vitality, to leap across the chasm that separates wrath from atonement, ~~time for~~ sin from holiness, hell from heaven, self from Christ: ^{even} and, with one of its smiles, ~~it~~ transforms black death into bright life. | So I then, say, that faith works - it is one stupendous work, which includes ~~all~~ ^{every} other: for when certain persons asked the Saviour "what shall we do that we might work the works of God?" His reply was: this is the work of God, that ye believe on

Him whom He hath sent," as if faith were the only principle that knows how to work ~~as~~ in a manner worthy of God who implanted it. | So that, "he that believeth on me," ^{says J. L.} ~~teaches~~ "hath everlasting life" — not proceeds to gain it — already possesses it, because noth-
ing is denied to the energy of faith: even God yields to it and opens up all His treasures to its all-taking hand.

But, let us understand that not alone in the sphere of religion is faith the master-actor: — but equally so in all the affairs and enterprises of men. Faith in something has always characterized the history of mind: and whenever the mind has moved on with rapidity, ~~and~~ with ^{its} concentrated forces en-
erated, towards ^{a chosen} ~~its~~ object, it has done so ^{propelled} ~~propelled~~ by the impulses of a strong faith. | Mere know-

- edge - however extensive and quickening - cannot exist
 to congealing exertion. | In ^{mere} ~~your~~ acquaintance with
 facts, and opinions, and ^{speculative truths} ~~principles~~, there is no vitality.
 That I know the whole history of England - or the
 entire plan according to which the motions of the stars
 are directed - or the complete records of some extensive
 and revolutionizing war - this leaves me inactive,
 because allowing me no work to do outside the silent
 operations of my own mind. | But, to call out from
 English history some great principle in the ex-
 periment of government - to draw down from the
 skies some great law of the material universe - to
 discover in the prosecution of a war some leading
 policy that ought to control a nation's intercourse
 with other nations - and to believe in these - as a
 principle, a law, a policy - calculated, if statesmanly

used, to benefit mankind:—it is this belief which will set me to work in behalf of my race. | Faith is that which realizes truth— which draws truth to the heart and makes it that heart's own— which incorporates it as an inseparable portion of the very being— which makes it ever-present— ~~like~~ a big and a tangible thing— and ever-attractive, and ever-important. | Galileo, who believed that the ^{earth} ~~world~~ revolved about the sun, was willing, in the strength of his faith, to die for its vindication— for he was identified with it. | Columbus had faith in his idea that a western continent existed to balance the eastern— and he was willing to impoverish himself, to brave unknown dangers, to risk all things, to give this idea a like place in the mind of the world. | Faith is infinitely

more than credulity - and yet how active even cre-
dulity is let the whole history of superstition attest.

Credulity is the idiotic offspring of a weak and dis-
 -ordered soul, ^{which is incapable of strong effort;} but faith is the intelligent conviction
 of a large and well-balanced nature which is capable
 of giving itself up to the sway of some great practical
 purpose. | Faith is more than mere reason. It is
 the entire soul in the act of ~~the~~ grasping what
 is concerned to be a real good: the soul, ^{engaged} ~~not~~
 not in simply receiving truths, but, ⁱⁿ seizing them,
embracing them, and then submitting to their im-
 -perial command. | It is this kind of faith
 that makes ^{men:} ~~men~~ certainly men of actions.
 They believe ⁱⁿ themselves - believe in others - or,
 they believe in calculations, and testimonies,
 and ~~means~~ ^{means:} of success keep the ^{whole} world

in motion. Deprive mankind of faith, and
 you decree the dissolution of society.

Now, God has ^{the essential} adopted ~~the~~ ^{of our nature} principles, and
 made it ^{an essential} part of practical Xty. — without the
 presence of which in the heart men will no
 more ^{be} moved towards heaven than stones ^{could} ~~can~~
 climb to the stars: — but which, being present,
 — then — swifter than an eagle cuts the air, does
 it wing the soul to God. | Christian faith is,
 i., just another form of natural faith: only with
 a different object in view. | Christian faith
 takes Christ home to the affections, and lodges
 Him there as the ^{great One} ~~the~~ for whom to labor and
 to live: leading its possessor to act in view of
 what this pre-eminent Lord has done and promised
^{as to} ~~in~~ for the future good of His followers, with at least

as much promptitude and energy and consistency,
 as ~~was~~ a worldly man acts, ^{and promises himself} in relation to the present
 of his existence. | Hence those sacrifices for the Saviour,
 - those exertions - those expenditures - those ~~expenditures~~ ^{deaths}
 that counting all things but loss for the excellency
 of His glory - which have always characterized ^{His} ~~the~~
 true people. | Hence, too, the immense ^{amount} display of
 moral power which xty., as exemplified in its
 worthy believers, ^{constantly puts forth} ~~constantly~~ operates for the welfare
 of mankind: because ~~its~~ faith in its doctrines,
 its hopes, its Author, works by love: a love ^{which} ~~that~~
 so far from exhausting itself upon its object in
 heaven, does only derive the greater strength from
 its adherence to Him, for spreading itself in uni-
 versal benevolence towards all the world, as He
 has directed it to do. | The faith of the xty.,

can, accordingly, exist without works - in obedience to its very nature - no more than the faith of a man of business or of pleasure can exist without works - in obedience to a similar nature.

Now, have you this faith - you the members of this Church? | Well - yes - your profession says to all who know you, that you have it. | Then, give it out in appropriate works - exhibit it in its ^{daily} victories. | In its essence, faith is invisible, like the soul in which it is imbedded, and which it animates. | No eye can see it by any act of direct vision. | No hand can touch it by any ^{experiment} effort of contact. | The person who possesses it cannot always ^{himself} detect it, by any movement of his own consciousness. He may even doubt its existence within him, as he tries to trace it by some effort of meditative thought.

A lamp, unlighted, if it could reason, might well
 question its capacity for shedding light around it
 the radiance for, ^{producing} which it was filled with oil: but
 let the flame be applied to its ready wick, and
 in the ~~illum~~ ^{luminous} circle which instantly cuts its
 place into the darkness, it discovers the power with
 which it has been endowed. | So faith, unexercised,
 eludes the search of him to whom this wealth of
 energy has been entrusted. | It to be seen, to be known
 for what it is, to ~~put~~ ^{answer} the question of its existence
 and ^{to comprehend} its energy, let it come ^{out} forth to view in the field
 of labor and of conquest for which it has been ap-
 pointed. | God is invisible: and even He must be
 known in His works. | When those works are such
 as only He could perform - then we discover Him
 in the demonstration which these impress upon the
 soul.

Many believers there are who, through almost the
 whole of their lives, are endeavoring to learn whether
 a saving faith is theirs: but where, in what, are they
 expecting to find the satisfying assurance? | Why, in
 their own hearts! | And because they are ^{unable} ~~unable~~ to
 discern the features of this heaven-born new man, there,
 among the shadows of ^{those} ~~their~~ ever-flitting emotions which
 will not stay long enough to be fairly looked at or ^{have}
^{their nature} examined - they bow their heads, hang their arms, and
 sigh out their sorrow. | It is in what we do
 for Christ that we discover our faith in Him. | It
 is when faith puts on its ^{work-day} ~~garments~~ of clothes - and
 actually goes forth to encounter the burden and
 heat of direct and positive labor - it is then, when
 she proceeds to expand the lungs in the open air
 of exertion, and bids you look upon her face bathed

in manly sweat, upon her hands horny with holding
 the plough amid the furrows of her master's fields,
 upon her whole person nerved to the enterprise of
 achieving salvation for a lost world - it is then that
 you recognize both her beauty and her strength,
 and ~~can~~ ^{in the fact} rejoice that she is yours. | The inactive you
 is the doubting you. | The listless believer is the de-
 pressed and gloomy believer. | It is when faith is
hidden away in the heart, and has no space in
 which to breathe and to act, that faith refuses to
 attend ^{its} ~~her~~ presence, or sing ^{you any} ~~her~~ song of hope, or ^{expand} ~~offer~~
 to you view its ^{its} wings of heavenly tunes. | Cage this eagle, and
 you ^{so} quench the fire of ~~his~~ his eyes, you so ^{smoke his} ~~discourage~~
~~his spirit pinions~~, you so discourage his spirit, as
 to make you suppose, by-and-by, that he is nothing
 more than some ordinary bird instead of being
 the king and the glory of all flying creatures. | He

~~wants~~ ^{needs} freedom. | He ~~wants~~ ^{needs} to approach and gaze
 upon the sun. | He ~~wants~~ ^{needs} to awaken the echoes of
 the mountain-top. | He needs to spread himself over
 the joyous sky.

O give your faith something to do - and you
 will no longer dispute the certainty of its power. | It
 will be seen in its ^{effect} influence upon yourself, in its
 influence over others. | Let it not lay, inarticulate
 and cold, within your breast. | Let it speak for X^t.
 Let it warm its blood in the activities of his ser-
 vice. | Let it go forth for sheaves.

O that we all had this faith as we ought to
 have it! What a church would we be! How
 the world around would gaze, and wonder, and
 admire, and, by God's blessing, imitate!