

Church Observer

G M Evans

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"ONE FAITH.—ONE LORD.—ONE BAPTISM."

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Poetry.

A PENITENTIAL HYMN.

Hearken, O God, unto a wretch's cries,
Who low dejected at Thy footstool lies!
Let not the clamour of my heinous sin
Drown my requests, which strive to enter in
At those bright gates, which always open stand
To such as beg remission at Thy hand.

Too well I know, if Thou in figour deal,
I can nor pardon ask, nor yet appeal;
To my hoarse voice Heaven will no audience
grant;

But, deaf as brass, and hard as adamant,
Beat back my words: therefore I bring to Thee
A gracious Advocate to plead for me.

What though my leprous soul no Jordan can
Re-cure, nor floods of the laved ocean
Make clean? Yet from my Saviour's bleeding
side

Two large and medicinable rivers glide.
Lord, wash me where those streams of life
abound,
And new Bethedas flow from every wound!

If I this precious laver may obtain,
I shall not then despair for any stain;
I need no Gilead's balm, nor oil, nor shall
I for the purifying hyssop call:
My spots will vanish in His purple flood,
And crimson there turn white, though washed
with blood.

See, Lord, with broken heart and bended knee,
How I address my humble suit to Thee!
O give that suit admittance to Thy ears,
Which floats to Thee not in my words, but
tears!
And let my sinful soul this mercy crave,
Before I fall into the silent grave.

Henry King, 1567.

GOD'S MERCIES AND CLAIMS.

An address delivered on Thanksgiving Day
(6th Nov. 1870) by the Rev. R. V.
Rogers, Minister at Victoria and Port
Ryerse, Diocese of Huron.

Deut. xvi. 16, 17.

"Three times a year," from all parts of
the land of Israel, business, however press-
ing, must be laid aside; pleasure, and self-
gratifications foregone; self, in all its de-
mands, denied; every man must take this
long journey up to Jerusalem—a journey
from many quarters expensive of time,
strength and means.

You and I can conceive of many a plead-
ing family and business excuses; but they
would not be received. He who knew,
and urges at the fitting time, the claims of
the several relations in which one man
stands to another, will not allow of any
other setting aside his claim; but impera-
tively says—"three times." Many, admit-
ting God's claim of this thrice appearing
every year, might plead the inconvenience
of a long, tedious, expensive, and even
dangerous journey to Jerusalem, as the
reason for some nearer place. The plea
cannot be admitted. It cannot be other-
wise than specified. He who best knew
why and wherefore, said the meeting was
to be "in the place which he should choose."
Jerusalem was the place of his choice.
Besides, the place being God's appoint-
ment, there is a moral argument against
every place being admitted, in the power
to unite hearts, by the association of bodies.
This coming together of the strength of
the land would join men together, and give
them a oneness of feeling; though many,
they would be one family; though apart by
distance yet they would be near in brother-
hood,—socially, and nationally one,—one
in heart. Then there is a power to make
men more religious, in these appearances
before God, to confess their dependence on
him for their blessings; and to show their
indebtedness to him for what they have by
making others, less blessed than they,
sharers of his bounty. Therefore, on ac-
count of the benefit to themselves and
others,—besides the presenting of them-
selves,—God added, "and they shall not
appear before me empty."

They were to give of their substance
"Every man shall give as he is able."
Ability to give was to be the measure of
giving; and this ability was to be measured
by God's giving to him, "according to the
blessing of the Lord thy God which he

hath given thee." Where God had given
little, little would be the power to give;
and little was expected. Where God had
given much, much was demanded; and he
who gave them what they had, knew the
proportion, and would be satisfied with
nothing less than his fair share. There-
fore, when God commanded—"three times"
—by way of completion he added,—"and
they shall not appear before me empty!"
Emptiness was forbidden. He knew that to
every one he had given something, and of
this something, be it less or more, he
required his share. At the Passover-feast,
"green ears of barley." At Pentecost, a
sheaf of new wheat reaped on purpose. At
Tabernacles, or booths, called the Feast of
Ingathering, held at the end of the year,
suitable offerings were expected as a free
will spontaneous token of gratitude for
bounties received.

In excuse for disobeying the words of
our text,— "three times" &c., &c. Some
might plead the danger of leaving their
possessions and families exposed to the
inroads of their enemies. The objector
is silenced, by God's providing against
this. The power that gave the command
"thrice in the year"—added "neither
shall any man desire thy lands, when thou
shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy
God thrice in the year,"—and the fact
that during the Jews occupying the land,
their enemies never did attack them, when
away in obedience to this command, is
proof of God's keeping his word to the very
letter.

We have considered this command of
God in itself:—how imperative how bind-
ing, nothing was to set it aside;—no ex-
cuse would be admitted for non-observance.
He who knew man's interests better than
man himself, and cared for man beyond
what he could care for himself, spoke the
word—insisted on its observance—and re-
moved out of the way of obedience, every
hindrance. Is it not so with all God's
commandments? Before proceeding with
our subject, I would remark that that can-
not be wrong in practice which is right in
principle. The principle of annual festi-
vals our text establishes; then the practice
is duty at this day as at that.

By nature man is a sociable being, made
for society. His organization of mind and
body cannot unfold itself by healthy exer-
cise in a state of isolation and solitude. At
the very creation of man, God said, "it is
not good that the man should be alone."
He who made man what he is—knew this;
and has provided society for man, where,
in the exercise of his social powers, he may
be a blessing, and yet blessed. God's
design in forming society for man and man
for society, was their mutual happiness.
Man perverts this design by indulging feel-
ings and introducing, what is contrary to
the happiness of society:—hence flows
most of the misery in the world.

Now, as then, God is to be publicly
acknowledged as the author and giver of
our mercies. The grateful heart in the
midst of its enjoyment, looks upwards and
says, "all things come of thee!" "That
thou hast given we have gathered; thou
openedst thine hand, we are filled with
good." "Seed-time, and harvest, labor,
and labor's reward, thou gavest; then,
seed to the sower, now, bread to the eater;
thou fillest all things living with plen-
teousness."

Of all creation, man is the most depend-
ent creature. All other animals can soon
help themselves, and supply their wants:
man is long helpless, and never independent.
Why? Because he is to have a moral
and spiritual growth as well as a physical.

Further. Brute instinct is soon educat-
ed; the education of mind is a long process.
It is this very dependence, man on man,
from his birth to his grave, which is the
schoolmaster, to train him for duty to God
and his fellow man. The sooner man learns
this lesson the better for himself and for
society. Conviction of his dependence on
God will make the religious man. Con-
viction of his dependence on his fellow-man

will make him the useful man. It is the
feeling of our wants and weakness that
sends us to God for their supply. When
feeling our need, we pray, "Our Father
who art in heaven, give us day by day our
daily bread," it is this sense of our own
necessities which leads us to an acquaint-
ance with the wants of others, and leads us
to seek to supply them.

Whilst at these feasts, the Jew was to
rejoice before the Lord his God, his family
"thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy
man-servant, and thy maid-servant," the
minister was not to be forgotten, "and the
Levite that is within thy gates," the poor
were to share in the general joy; therefore
they were to remember "the stranger"
sojourning among them, "and the fatherless,
and the widow."

In the observance of these feasts, God
is to be substantially acknowledged, giving
to God as God has given to us, "according
to the blessing," "as God has prospered
us." Mere lip-service is the sacrifice of
fools. God demands a gift at our hands
in proof of the sincerity of our love, both
to himself, and our brethren. It is "with
sacrifices God is well pleased," when, what
we give costs us something; a costly gift is
proof of genuine love. It was this, it was
a sacrifice, that made the widow's farthing,
greater riches, a more acceptable offering,
than all which the rich cast into the Lord's
treasury. She of her penury:—they of
their abundance. Their gifts to the
temple were what they could spare, without
feeling the loss: hers was all she had,
all her living!

The members of our church have yet a
lesson to learn to give as God has given to
them; to give of their ability, ever to
"remember the words of the Lord Jesus,
how he said it is more blessed to give than
to receive."

From the observance of these feasts
none are exempt: and, therefore, the divine
call, "Kings of the earth, and all people,
princes, and all judges of the earth, let
them praise the name of the Lord." Each,
according to his ability. The Sovereign
on his throne; the Judge on his
bench. Each, in his sphere, is to honor
the Lord with his substance; glorify God
with his body and spirit; both are loans
from God, entrusted for God's glory, and
man's good.

It follows, that Governments are at fault.
Our government is at fault in not setting
apart an annual Thanksgiving. It is
injustice done to God who daily loadeth us
with benefits. It is unkindness to us, in
not giving the opportunity to "render to
the Lord for all his benefits."

In our case, the civil power has
neglected its bounden duty, and, therefore,
our Bishop calls on you to offer unto God
thanksgiving—to offer to the mighty God
as the God of your mercies—and thus
glorify him; give him the glory to whom
the glory is due.

We are invited to thank him for general,
and special mercies; in the words of our
chief Pastor, "to unite in offering to
Almighty God, praise and thanksgiving
for the blessings of a fruitful year which
have been so abundantly bestowed upon
our country, and for the many other mer-
cies which we have experienced at the hand
of our gracious God."

Among the common blessings, but not
less thankworthy because common, he
mentions—the blessings of a fruitful season.
Among the special, he points out peace
and protection. Observe the contrast of
our state with that of others.—While
other nations have been enduring all the
horrors of war, we have peace in our
borders; and the attempt which has been
made by misguided men to inflict on us
similar evils, has, by the good hand of our
God upon us, resulted in good.

"Say not in thine heart," for it is false,
"my power, and the might of mine hand
hath gotten me this wealth;" "but thou
shalt remember that it is He that giveth
thee power to get wealth!"
The tendency of things, at this day, is

to lead us to forget this. Alas, this
neglect of our rulers is at once a cause,
and the effect of this practical infidelity,
which says, no God!

The pride of our fallen nature loves to
sacrifice the sacrifice of praise to its own
net, to take the credit to itself for what it
has, rather than give the honor to God.
"But, ye have not so learned Christ
Jesus."

"We are now, thank God, in the enjoy-
ment of perfect peace,—a fruitful season
has rewarded the labours of our husband-
men, and health and prosperity have been
vouchsafed to us in large measure. Christ
is Prince of the Kings of the earth."
"The king's heart is in the Lord's hand."
"He putteth down one, and setteth up
another." "He giveth peace." At his
command the sword leaps from its scabbard;
or, is still, and is quite. "He makes wars
to cease!" War is one of God's four sore
judgments!

In our case, "the sons of destruction"
were restrained; and their violent dealings
returned on their own heads; and the by-
standing, looking on world said, "this is
the Lord's doing," perceiving, "that it
was his work."

For these and all the mercies which we
daily receive, let us render the sacrifice of
praise and thanksgiving to Him, whose
mercies are over all His works, who has
said, *whoso offereth thanks and praise he
honoureth me*; and who will not reject the
imperfect prayers and offerings of His peo-
ple who wait on him in faith and humility.

We have seen what a sacrifice of praise
was, under the Law; I ask, Is it less than
this, under the Gospel?

There, it was, "a rendering to the Lord
the honor due," "ascribing to the Lord
worship, and power." It was a lip-service,
but only as the language of gratitude, and
this enforced by actions expressive of de-
pendence. It was not the service of lips
only; theirs was a language not to be mis-
taken; they sacrificed the sacrifice of
thanksgiving "the calves of their lips," but,
in token of sincerity they offered to God
their time, themselves, and their substance:
I ask, Will the God of our mercies be
satisfied with less than this?

Our Bishop suggests as the special
objects of your bounty, to-day, the mission
fund of the Diocese.

Let me remark, without some such fund
as this, the Church could never enlarge
itself. The mission-fund is the natural
support of our weak churches. All churches
are, at first weak, and need support, until
growth has given them strength.

Now, it is of the nature of the church,
that if it does not increase, it decreases;
if it do not go forward, it goes backward.
Then, a fund like this is essential, not only
to the well-being, but to the very existence
of our church; and, as the feeder of the
church, its well-being depends greatly on
the state of its treasury.

With the church, success is always
followed by increased demand on the re-
sources of the church; and increased expen-
diture can be sustained, only, by enlarged
liberality.

—On the occasion of the promotion of the
Rev. Dr. McNeile to the deanery of Ripon,
a public subscription was commenced in
Liverpool for the purpose of erecting a
statue in his honour. Mr. G. G. Adams,
of 128, Sloane-street, was entrusted with
the Commission, and has now completed
the work. The figure is 7 feet high, inde-
pendently of the pedestal, and is executed
in pure white Carrara marble. The Dean
is represented standing on the right leg,
the left foot a little advanced, the head
erect, and looking to the front. The left
holds an open book, the right is slightly
extended, in an attitude of demonstration.
Altogether, the pose of the figure is one of
great dignity and freedom, and the
doctor's robes, which are very skilfully
treated, add much to the general effect.
The statue is to be placed in St. George's
Hall, at Liverpool.