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The Superiority of the Unseen.

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THE things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."—Paul.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."—Shakespeare.

Materialistic philosophy would have us believe that the only desirable, yea, the only real things, are the material things, which may be seen around us. A materialistic age readily lends the ear to this seductive teaching, and easily loses sight of the unseen realities, of which the modern Horatio's philosophy has not dreamt.

The Word of God reveals our connection with the unseen world and the presence of unseen realities all about us. When King Ahaziah sent his captains with their fifties to arrest Elijah, the unseen power which protected the prophet was manifested in the fire that descended from heaven and consumed the king's soldiers. When the Syrian forces surrounded Dothan to capture Elisha, he prayed that the eyes of his frightened servant might be opened to behold the body-guard of his master and he saw the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about Elisha. The mysterious sound in the mulberry trees inspired the Israelites, while the noise as of a moving host of chariots and horses so terrified the Syrians that they raised the siege of Samaria, abandoned their equipment and fled for their lives. The angel of death, from his unseen abode, breathed upon the Assyrian army, as the hosts were encamped against Jerusalem, and their thousands were slain. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him and delivereth them."—Ps. xxxiv: 7. When one of Jesus' disciples was using force to prevent his arrest, he said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" When heaven's unseen forces go forth to battle, no array of earthly powers can hope for victory. The superiority is on the side of the unseen.

Nature also furnishes us examples of the superiority of the unseen over the seen. In viewing a landscape, the grass, trees, flowers, etc., can be seen and their beauty admired; but the life that pulsates within them and imparts to them their form, fragrance and beauty is unseen. In fact, the seen is merely the phenomena revealing the power of the unseen. The soul of a human being cannot be found by dissecting the body, either can the song of a bird be discovered by chemical analysis. Gravity, for instance, is an unseen force causing every atom in the universe to tug away at every other atom, and thus holds worlds, planets and suns in their orbits.

The seen emanates from the unseen. The seen is but the effect, of which the unseen is the cause. "What is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear."—Heb. xi: 3. Mind, then is not a product of matter, but matter must be a product of mind.

Does it not then naturally follow that when the seen shall have filled its mission, it will be merged into the unseen? Jesus told His disciples that it was expedient for them that he should go away. Much as His bodily presence had been to them, it was to be merged into the unseen, and they were to have another Comforter, who although they could not see him with the natural eye, is no less a real Person and Presence. The eleven appearances of Jesus to His disciples after His resurrection, coming sometimes through closed doors and again vanishing from their sight, would help them to depend upon the Holy Spirit, who not being subject to bodily limitations, can be everywhere present and always would be with them. What a privilege to have seen Jesus in bodily form! And yet the unseen Presence is

better for the Christian. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."—John xx: 29. Blessed is that church that can trust the unseen Presence as life and guide.

In our experience, we begin with the material, the seen, the temporal; these lead to the spiritual, the unseen, the eternal, into which we, too, are merging. For which, then, are we living, laboring, sacrificing; for the seen or the unseen; the material or the spiritual; the temporal or the eternal? Are we putting time, energy and money into the unseen and real, into education, character and heavenly treasure, or do we covet more earnestly earth's corner lots?

Doctrine and Atmosphere.

CHRISTIANITY is an atmosphere as well as a doctrine. You go into a Christian home and at once you are conscious of a standard of life, a tone of feeling, and a type of purpose at a wide remove from the prevalent temper of the ungodly and purely worldly household.

You notice the contrast between the Christian and the secular atmosphere in whole communities. Take a place in which the institutions of religion have been firmly planted, as in a New England town like Northampton or some of the villages of the Western Reserve of Ohio, and compare their tone and standards with those of places like some it would, perhaps, be invidious to mention, in which churches have gained a precarious foothold, and you can feel and see the contrast.

Sometimes one is disposed to question whether churches that fail to make rapid gains are doing much, if anything, to justify their existence; but when in that questioning mood, we ought not to forget that the mere fact that the observances of religion and the preaching of the gospel are helping to generate the Christian atmosphere in many households and throughout the community, is not of trivial significance. Of course the more vigorous and aggressive the life of the church, the stronger will be its influence in these directions, but when churches fail to do all that they might and ought to do, there is a great deal of this priceless contagion that emanates from them.

It is also worth while to remember that the atmosphere of a Christian man, a household, or a church, in some respects is as important as its doctrine. We have all of us known persons whose creeds were quite defective, but they so incarnated and illustrated the Christian spirit, and diffused such a genuinely divine temper, that we were forced to acknowledge that though they might be at fault in some of their beliefs, they were gloriously right in their dispositions and in their attitude toward men and God. We have personally been intimate in Quaker and Swedenborgian households that seemed to live in the atmosphere of the divine life.

On the other hand, most of us have known Christians who seemed to have perfectly correct beliefs, but they were so narrow, so sour and generally disagreeable in their temper, that every one was sure that they had not been Christianized in feeling and in ideal, no matter how clearly they had apprehended Christian truth. Normally, of course, the Christian atmosphere is the resultant of the Christian doctrine, and the most correct belief will produce the noblest Christian life.

Though the failure of a right belief to generate the Christian temper logically does not discredit the doctrine, but rather the believer's sincere, whole-hearted response to it, yet, as a matter of fact, the most effective way to commend the Christian doctrine is through the dissemination of the Christian atmosphere. One ought not to wonder that when the head of a family, though nominally a Christian believer, is sour, hard, and uncharitable, that his children are not won to a religious life. And in a church doctrine is not everything. Atmosphere counts for a great deal.

A quarrelling, bickering church, in which the spirit of sympathy and helpfulness is wanting, has little attractive power, no matter how scriptural the belief for which it professes to stand. And a good many who have thought that they were contending for the faith, and have plumed themselves accordingly, have forgotten that the Apostle does not simply urge believers to speak the truth, but to speak it "in love."

The Lord's Supper.

WE best interpret the Lord's Supper when we put ourselves imaginatively back into the events of the evening on which He instituted it. The feeling which he came to the upper room, where His disciples had made ready the Passover feast, were those that arise in our hearts when we know that we are to take a last meal with those who are very dear to us. The disciples did not know what was to take place during the next twenty-four hours, but He knew, and His soul was filled with the affliction and pathos that a my sensitive spirit would associate with such an occasion.

He wanted to have His friends remember Him, and with singular originality He proposed that His disciples, after he had gone, should gather about the table and, as they ate the bread and drank the wine they should consciously remember Him. His followers caught the spirit of His suggestion, and from it has come the ordinance we know as the Lord's Supper.

There has been hot debate as to whether we are commanded to keep the Supper, whether it is obligatory upon Christians. It seems to us that those who raise that question have so far missed the inner spirit of the observance that it is impossible for them to keep it in any worthy sense. The Lord's Supper is not instituted in the realm of law, but in the realm of love; and those to whom the suggestion and wish of Jesus make no appeal have nothing to do with it. They are so alien to its spirit that any observance of it on their part must be a meaningless form.

A kindred judgment must be passed on most of the disputes that have arisen about other features of the observance. How men miss the living sentiment of the institution when they press our Lord's metaphors into a mathematical equation, and query whether He meant that the bread and wine were literally His body and blood! Those who believe that are not thereby precluded from an acceptable observance, but the essential feature of a worthy observance is not the interpretation of a phrase, but the spirit of loving remembrance of the Lord, an appreciation of what He is and what He has done.

In almost all of our churches, much more could be done to make the Lord's Supper yield its power and blessing to those who partake of it. Making it a formal ceremony robs it of its distinctive elements. Discussions as to the kind of bread or wine, or individual cups, and other matters are utterly alien to its spirit. It is a sacrament of love, and, while things are to be done decently and in order, discussions of method are as unseemly as how a babe shall kiss its mother, or how friends, whose hearts are one, shall greet each other after long absence.

The main thing is to remember the Lord, and to do this worthily we need to realize afresh His character and work, His suffering and death and triumph, and the promise of a reunion with Him in the city of the vision. The hurried observance of the Supper, after a morning service, when members of the Sunday school are watching the clock for fear the school may be late; the discontinuance of the old-fashioned preparatory service or covenant-meeting, anything that makes the Supper a formal ceremony or an observance the value of which consists in doing it, and not in the spirit we bring to it or take from it, misses all its best and highest features.