

The Greatness and Glory of Man as Set Forth in the 8th Psalm.

An address by Rev. G. R. White in the Hantsport Baptist church, Sunday evening, April 2nd, 1899.

A quarter of a century ago both scientists and theologians discussed with much freedom and with a degree of certainty the possibility and the probability that other worlds beside our own were inhabited with races of beings like or superior to man. That these countless worlds, many of them larger and seemingly as beautiful as our own, should not be inhabited seemed out of harmony with the best judgment of the age, therefore the genius of both science and theology peopled these worlds with intelligent beings. But it often happens that the wisdom of one age becomes the folly of the next. And today, with the light of science blazing into this darkness, the verdict is that none of these worlds have plant or animal life like unto our world, and are not capable of sustaining such life. Therefore man on this speck of a world is still the unique and crowning work of God. Prof. Proctor, an English astronomer of note, wrote a book entitled, "Other Worlds than Ours," wherein he emphatically advocated the theory that all the planets in our solar system are inhabited with races similar or superior to man. Ten years later the same writer said, "The new evidence when properly examined is found to oppose fatally instead of supporting the theory I had hoped to establish." Prof. Townsend says, "Every year the advocates of a plurality of inhabited worlds find less and less encouragement. Nineteen twentieths of the beautiful bodies that glimmer in the heavens which a few years since, by some scientists were thought to be inhabitable are now transferred with scarcely a dissenting voice from the positive to the negative side of this question."

What blazing light all this casts upon the doctrine of the 8th Psalm, viz., "The greatness of man." The holy Scriptures everywhere support the idea that man is the chief and crowning work of Jehovah's hands. "All things were created for him." All suns shine to lend him light and all world's move to hold man's little speck of a world in safe balance. For man the Saviour lived and loved and died. De Quincy commenting on Genesis says, "Is not man there found to be the central figure while all beside serve as a back-ground for him. He is not one part of the furniture of this planet, not the highest merely in the scale of its creatures, but lord of all, sun, moon and stars, and all visible creation borrowing all their worth and significance from the relation in which they stand to him." When Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath," one writer suggests, "that had occasion required it, he might have said with equal fitness the world, the stars and everything else in the physical universe have been made for man and not man for them." "Thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." Here is a dominion and power which proves man no mere afterthought in God's creative purpose, or a being to be outdone by the creative genius of God or the countless ages of a slow moving evolution. But man, the forethought of the creative God, and all things else created for him. Not only does man astonish earth but also heaven with his Godward movements. Let but one poor sinner repent on this earth and it is sung in heaven. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." The Bible places man at the head of all created intelligences not only in this world but in the world to come. And there is no reason to suppose that God has or ever will create beings superior to man. Man in his original purity and in his redeemed state stands next to God. There are said to be only two passages in the Authorized Version of the Scripture that seem to question this statement, and experts declare that these, when properly understood, lend aid to the doctrine of man's superiority to all created intelligence rather than to oppose it. One of these passages is found in 2 Peter 2: 11, where angels are said to be greater in "might and power" than men. But these were not representative men, for verse 10 proves them defiled in flesh and heart. And it has been quite clearly shown that it is altogether doubtful if "Peter thought of making any comparison between men and angels as to the relation they stand to God in worth or holiness." And if the doctrine of angelic superiority is not taught here then it is nowhere taught in the Bible. But you will ask what of the statement in the Psalm, is it not emphatic? "Thou hast made him (man) a little lower than the angels." It has long been known to the scholars that the English translation is at fault here, and for the rest of us, happily, the R. V. has made the correction. And the corrected form brings not only this beautiful Psalm into harmony with itself but into harmony with the whole Book of God in declaring the majesty and greatness of man over all created intelligences, not only in this world but in the world or worlds to come. The word translated "angels" in the A. V. is "Eloheim," which means "God." One translator renders the passage thus, "For thou hast caused him to lack but little of God." The more literal rendering is

said to be, "For thou hast created him but a shaving from God." The revisor put it, "For thou hast made him little lower than God." This gives a new tone to the Psalm and renders it harmonious while it maintains the greatness and majesty of man. "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who has set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou established strength, because of thine adversaries, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens the work of thy finger, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than God and crownest him with glory and honor. Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands! Thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" R. V.

The 8th psalm sings man's greatness and glory while it exalts him to the closest possible approach to God. Only a shaving between man and God. Above man stands God only. One is made to tremble, to wonder and adore in the presence of such a passage of inspiration as this. We need not be told that all true science is advancing in the foot prints of revelation, and together they place the crown of intelligence and all possible glory and greatness upon the head of man. In answer to the question: "What is man?" Prof. Townsend says it may be answered by asking another: "What is he not?" Some years ago science asked the question whether in the future some being greater than man might not arise, and snatch the crown from man's brow? But science has answered her own question in the negative. Prof. Agassiz, called attention to the facts: "That the spinal column in the first vertebrates is horizontal; in the next higher organization the birds it stands in an oblique position, while in man it is perpendicular. Hence the perpendicular of creation is reached in man and any further change could not be one of elevation but descent." Hugh Miller also proves man to be the highest order of beings that ever will stand on the earth, he says: "He crowns the long series of animal creations whose fossils are embedded in the successive geological strata as we ascend from the first rocks to the alluvium on which we dwell." To men of science such a conclusion is all convincing. Darwin's testimony was, "Man is the wonder and glory of the universe."

As simple minded Christians, many of us have settled the question to our own satisfaction long ago, by simple faith in the statement of Revelation. The fact is we don't know how to do it any other way. We do not know enough to arouse in question what God has settled in his Book. We open our Bible to the second chapter in Genesis and read: "Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all the works which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because in it he had rested from all his work which God had created and made." That is enough for the Christian; and since science has silenced her own guns all is peace and man is king now and forever in the realm of creations.

But still another view point from which we behold the greatness and glory of man, namely, that which he has already done and appears capable of doing. The mighty triumphs in discovery, invention with her progress in the various arts and sciences during the past half century almost paralyze the brain, and opens to us almost infinite fields of possibility. If it be true, as is hinted in that somewhat marvellous book, "The Christ of Today," by the Rev. Dr. George A. Gordon, of Boston, that there are great areas of undeveloped brain power in the most thoroughly educated men of the day that have never been touched, then we have not reached anything like the possible limits of man's greatness and power. This fallow ground of the brain is still waiting for the "new education" to stir it into active force for God and the race. For as Dr. Gordon says: "The new education is not the enemy of the teacher, but rather the friend of the child." I presume, as teachers in day and Sunday Schools, you are each one doing your best; if not you are unworthy of your sacred trust. Dr. Gordon's illustration is powerful as he represents the most skilled men of science "as lifting the burdens of life with a single finger, when their Maker has provided them a full hand, and driving the supports, upon which they are to found their home, with a bare fist, when they might employ a trip-hammer."

It is not then the creation of an higher order of beings that God seeks, but the full development of the divine power, which he has placed in man. God ceased his creative work in the second chapter of Genesis, but his work of fashion, forming and developing is still going on—the continents are rising and sinking—winter's frost and summer's heat are so many sculptors chiseling the everlasting hills. With this both science and the Bible agree. Shall we halt long enough to ask: "What is man?" "Only a shaving from God." When the forces

that are in man and in creation are fully harnessed, then will appear wonders in science, invention, discovery, and in civilization that will more than rival all the romantic dreams of the fabled orient. Let man but put himself in fullest and freest touch with God, and what he has already achieved compared with what he may yet do, will be but the making of soap-bubbles, to the construction of a universe. What prophesy Jesus uttered when, in the presence of some of his most wondrous miracles, he said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he also do, and greater works than these shall I do, because I go unto my Father." But all this is said of man here, man sinful. What shall we say of man redeemed, man sinless, deathless, invested with the power of an endless life? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." "Like him," in form and manifested glory, not only so, but like him in the "sweep and scope of a deathless intelligence." For as endless ages roll they shall call man nearer and yet nearer to his Maker until he shall only be "a shaving from God." Under the spell of such a thought—"What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

It is here that revelation embraces science, while she cries: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even also as I have overcome and am sit down with my Father in his throne." A peep into the dazzling glories of heaven was the privilege of John the divine. What did he see? "I saw thrones and the Saints of God sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." "Thrones" and "judgments." Are not these the equipments of kings? "Kings and priests unto God and ye shall reign forever and ever." But we see not yet all things put under man. Sin for the time has snatched the crown from his brow, but Christ the Lord will replace it. Well has it been asked: "After the frost has touched and blighted the rose can one judge of its native fragrance and beauty." We think of the long catalogue of sin and crime charged against the race of man, and hear the cry of the blood-stained earth from the days of righteous Ahrim down to the Spanish-American war; with lying and deception, since the first race hatred, down to the Dreyfus case now in the French courts. We see also satan, the great iconoclast of the ages, smashing our glorious humanity into a thousand fragments, staining all in sin and shame, and we cry: "How long, O Lord, how long?" It was such an age when Christ Jesus appeared the Babe in Bethlehem's manger—then hope immortal sprang afresh in human hearts. And today it is in the living, loving and resurrected Son of God. We have the foregleam of man's present greatness and his future glory declared. Wait! wait! trembling humanity until Christ be formed in us—"for we shall be like him." Till then, "hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." And assure thy trembling, jaded spirit that out of that which seems ruin, God will yet construct a temple of inconceivable splendor and glory.

"For so the whole round world is every way,
Bound by golden chains about the feet of God."

"An Indispensable Work."

BY F. C. WRIGHT.

"The spirit like some heavenly wind,
Breathes on the sons of flesh,
Creates anew the carnal mind,
And forms the man afresh."

Now, let us open our "hymnals" to number 265 and all join in singing this grand old song. Be sure that you sing it with a spiritual emphasis. Many a "tough" old sinner, who could not sing here, but now redeemed by most precious blood, will be heard there. Yes, and as the poet has said:—

Then loudest of the throng I'll sing,
While heaven's resounding arches ring,
With shouts of sovereign grace."

Oh, what a grand chorus that will be! Even now as we write, we are thrilled with the thought. A few seasonable thoughts present themselves to us, and as we note them down, we earnestly hope that they may prove helpful to some one whose eye catches these lines.

Is the truth, now to be presented, being emphasized in our present day teaching and preaching as it used to be, and as perhaps it ought to be yet? The "indispensable work" of this article relates especially to the preliminary and preparatory work of the Spirit in conviction and regeneration. We are taught, "That the wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof and canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth," so is every one that is born of the Spirit. This blowing of the wind is compared to the work of the Spirit. The Spirit breathes on the sons of flesh. How mysterious it may be to a great many people, yet how true it is, especially to those who have been exercised thereby. The word "listeth" is perhaps better understood if we use the real word which is "wills"—now read it using wills for listeth. The Spirit blows or breathes where "He wills." Now we have the idea more clearly—as "He wills" is according to a purpose, even the eternal purpose of God. Yes, it is according to the good pleasure of His will since it is upon whom He wills. Oh, what efficacy in this breathing work of the blessed Holy Spirit. How it