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"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."—Psalm 137, 4-5.

The Candle of the Lord. 53

BY THE REV. PHILLIPS BROOKS.

A Sermon recently preached in Westminster Abbey.

"The Spirit of man is the candle of the Lord."—

The essential connection between the life of God and the life of man is the great truth of the world, and that is the truth which Solomon sets forth in the striking words which I have chosen for my text. The picture that the words draw is one of the most simple. A candle stands on the table. It is unlighted. Fire is brought into the room from some burning hearth outside. It flares and quivers, and any moment may go out, but the vague, uncertain blaze touches the candle, and the candle catches fire, and its flame burns strong and pure and constant. The candle becomes a fire, a manifestation point for all the neighborhood which is illuminated by it. The candle is lighted by the fire, and the fire manifested by the candle. They bear witness that they are made for one another by the ways in which they incorporate each other's life. The inferior substance renders obedience to the superior, the wax catches the subtle flame which is its master, and yields to its power. A disobedient substance if you try to burn it neither gives the fire a chance to show its brightness, nor gathers any splendor to itself; it only calls forth sullen resistance, and as the

heat increases, it splits and breaks, but will not burn. But the candle does, and so in it the scattered finds a point of permanent and clear expression.

THE DIVINE FIRE.

Now, in regard this lighting of life from life there are two things to be noticed—the two which appeared in the story of the candle. There must be a corresponding of nature between the two, and secondly, a cordial obedience of the less to the greater. The nature that cannot feel the other nature's warmth, even if it held to it, and which refuses to be held where the other's flame can reach it, that must go unlighted, no matter how hotly the fire of the higher life may burn. We need to turn to Solomon and read his word again. 'The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.' God is the fire of this world. What thing of nature can picture to us the thought which has always lifted men's heart when they have said the word God, like this strange thing, so heavenly, so terrible, and yet so gracious so full of creativeness, and yet to sweep whatever opposes it out of its path; the marvel, the beauty, the glory, the mystery of fire? Men have felt the fitness of the picture, and this fire has crowded closest of all the elements round the throne on which the Deity of their conception is seated. God is the fire; the spirit of man is the candle. If man is of a nature which corresponds to the nature of God, the life of God which is spread throughout the universe, gathers itself into him, and men, ay, and all othe