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A SERMON

PREACHED BY REV. W. W. BREWER IN THE METHODIST CHURCH, PENNING, ON SUNDAY, APRIL 16TH, 1882.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge, and if one died for all, then were all dead."—Cor. v. 14.

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."—Cor. v. 11.

Religion is needed for the soul, the same as food and air for the body, or facts and education for the mind. Religion regarded from a human standpoint partakes of human differences, and for this reason the human world is not a grand uniformity. Methods of thinking, judging and worshipping differ. The religious thinking of to-day is very different from that of a century ago. Each age, feeling the needs of its own peculiar character, helped itself out of the treasury of truth only to such thoughts as contributed to its ruling idea. In this we see the hand of God. The Divine Spirit caused such truths to prevail as would best serve the passing moral condition of mankind. Time was, when the supreme motive of manifest religion was fear. The retributive idea held the foreground in men's conceptions of the divine nature. The thunder was voiced vengeance, the lightning was leaping wrath. The majesty, power, the repaying vengeance, were more apparent than the mercy, the love, the blessing. In one roll of thunder men were pleased to see more divine meaning than in months of sunlight; and it was well; for the strong animal man needed stern moral checks. Fear was a benefactor, the missionary of the merciful God, wielding a flaming sword at the gates of licentiousness. But now—like a long procession, the Christian world is coming up out of the night of fear, hastening from its indistinctness and shapes of terror to the sunlight of God's love with its clearness of vision and angels of hope. In the text we have one, yes, the grandest incentive to good and holy life. But not the only motive. Paul had just said, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." The terror of the Lord was invoked to help restrain, and yet against this phenomenon come the words, "There is the fulfilling of the law." "The love of Christ constraineth us." This we perceive that the world of moral motives is as large and rich as the world of physical beauty, and if a single heart cannot build its home by every beautiful vale, but must go from many to the one, so in the world of morals—the heart must retreat from the whole universe, to take refuge in a part. Am I wrong in saying that to the city of God there are many paths—paths for different centuries, different meridians and different individuals? There was something in the times of Calvin, Luther and Wesley and even later down that made the motive of punishment to be very influential for good. To acquire whether any other motive would have done as good service would be about like the inquiry whether some other method of heat and light might not have been resorted to by the Creator that would have made our existing sun unnecessary. It is certain that the "terror of the Lord" wielded a mighty influence on past centuries, and the same impulse has come and is sphereing itself in our moral heavens, viz., "the constraining love of Christ." Did I call this a new impulse? This needs qualifying. It is a new impulse, as a grand controlling power, but old as eternity in being. Love and only love is the primal expression of all things, the whole pressure of the divine economy towards love. This is the first and great commandment—"That ye love one another." It is the gospel of creation, the blue arch of the sky folding over the earth like the curtains of an infant's bed, the morning with its breezy freshness and the resurrection feeling it awakens in the soul, the noon with its broad and dazzling glories resting on the world till it becomes drowsy with excess of light, the evening with its stealing shadows, the night with its roof of stars—all in expressive language telling us of love. This love, new to us as saving force, has eternity in its heart, the great sea will lose its swell and rhythm, the stars will fade, the sun himself shall die, "and nature sink in years. But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth. Unhurt amidst the war of elements, the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds." Without hesitation, I say justice has not been done to this affectional force in our religion. Men have been taught to fear God, not to love him, to see him in the earthquake and the storm, in the deluge and ten plagues, in terrible calamities and the stalking spectre of pestilence. God has been painted as a dreadful eye, piercing through the darkness to spy out the sins of men who must meek and skulk about the world, or as a naked bony arm, uplifted to crush his children down with horrid squelch to an eternal hell. "Terror is, yet true. We think God for a change. The primal idea is

coming back to us. Motives come and go along with the coming and going of new times and new men. The old ones do not become false but they fail to move men. In the childhood of some of you here to-day it was customary to frighten children into virtue. But Christian children of to-day are led to the sunlight, and hope-hued paths of virtue, by being shown the lovely side of Christianity. Music, books, Christmas festivals, tender Sunday-school teachers and a thousand intentions of love draw their spirits up to God. This new motive is rising sun-like upon our world. He that was "shifted up" is constraining men, and poor fallen humanity shall soon seek God—not because there is a devil and hell—but because there is a God and heaven. Yet do not forget this, that however any class or age may rise above the influence of the penalty of sin, yet punishment will remain a perpetual fact in the economy of grace—the dark cloud will rise or fall according to the quality of humanity. We have a good idea taken of what I mean in our military laws. When war clouds arise it is necessary for the government to repeat the law that treason is death. Yet this law might be repealed, were it not for a low form of patriotism possible here and then. The true man lives above it, ignores it, forgets it; his love of country constrains him. We read of mercenary Persian troops, behind whom drivers went with large whips, and victory came not from love of country but from fear of scourge. But let soldiers be true, noble, heroic, as is the case with our army, then the flag overhead with its red, white and blue shall carry in its waving folds a grand incentive, its threads become the threads of life, and its red the blood of men's hearts. Is Christianity less noble than patriotism? Shall its impulse be a scourge, or the holy principle of love? The banner of Stratton is grander than any that ever waved over bloody battles; its lustrous folds rustle in winds of immortality; it is the flag of the great Fatherland where there are no tears, no sorrow, pain or death. Surely under its snowy and heavenly azure soldiers in this noble battle-field need no impulse but the love of their passion-full hearts. "Perfect love casteth out fear." Paul, John, Fenelon, Madam Guyon and the Wesleys are of this school of thinkers. What is true of a mind is true of an age. I dare believe that this age shall become emancipated of this one idea, and almost forgetting the gloomy hell draw all its power and inspiration from a vision of Christ and His love. The world is coming to this. The great loving spirit of Christ is developing in the hearts of men. In an age that loves the poor, that governs its children by love instead of torture, that enthrones kindness in public schools and even in jails, an age that will build homes for the poor drunkard, for the lame, the friendless, fallen and infirm; in an age that has done a thousand times more than this—it can hardly be expected that the pulpits ignoring this grand uprising of tenderness, will daily point to the horrors of perdition while the very earth is being enchanted by the vision of love. Oh, what a sad betrayal this would be of the pulpit's trust! This great Book of Gospels says that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." It says "God is love." Verily, friends, this New Testament is a love-book, a song about the heart of God. It declares that "ye are not come unto a mountain that might not be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto terrible blackness, and darkness and tempest," so terrible that Moses said "I exceedingly quake and fear, but ye are come to Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God." These words spoken to Christians do, nevertheless, an ounce to all the ruling principles of the Gospel. Its great spectacle is not a Sinai, thunder-riven, lightning-wreathed and crowned with garlands of twisted fire, but Mount Zion, streaming with light, vocal with song crowned with eternal love. God has given to us Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Calvary, Olivet. Let us enjoy to the full this wondrous love. Happy are we if we have come upon an age that will take up this dominant impulse of Christianity. Keep to the front, and lift to the highest the love of Christ. Love! love! O, the music of the word! Can you tell me all it means? I say love is favor. I diminish the thing I attempt to define. I call it mercy. I have torn into two syllables that which was greater in one. I call it life, but feel it something more. I have closed my eyes and set my fancy adreaming, if maybe I could catch some vision in the clouds which might help me to tell men what love is. I have seen nothing. I have called to mind all ancient and modern exhortations of filial, paternal, fraternal love, and they all pale in sight of Calvary, and are but shadowy glimmerings of the love of Jesus to our sin-cursed world. Who can tell us all about the love of Christ? Let an archangel try—his voice would falter and his language fail. His love is mightier than the hurricane, more tender than the zephyr, endless as the years of the Eternal, deep as the plummet of God, full as the brimming sea, free as the smiles of sun-

mer, and exhaustless as the well-springs of eternity. "O, for this love let rocks and hills Their lasting silence break, And all harmonious human tongues The Savior's praises speak."

The love of Christ is constraining the nations. His love words to men, whispered in vales of Olivet more than eighteen centuries ago now reverberate in the spicy groves of India, in the idolatrous cities of China, along the banks of the Amazon and the Nile, in the polished courts of Europe, and all over the broad continent given to us. And unlike all other echoes, every tone is louder than the preceding one. The whisper has swelled into a shout, the shout has loudened into thunder, and the thunder has so deepened, and is so deepening that soon men shall hear little else save this love-shout of the Redeemer. Thank God the eternal love, like a great gulf stream of holy influence is flowing through the frozen ocean of our lives, bringing summer and song and all the fragrance of the tropics in its train. Upon islands belted with ice, along shores white with the frozen surf of sin, against those huge embankments of winter, still, aye! existing. Against all that is icy, and cold, and petrified in our hearts, it invokes the current of this celestial love.

How often that mighty river, with wider, deeper, grander sweep and flow pour upon us the full side of thy talent and immeasurable heart until our hearts are melted and mingled in thy fervid stream. "The love of Christ constraineth us." Friends, I have found the golden cord that will lead from the darkness into light. Upon now the light breaks forth, and a voice all compass and love says to me, to you, to all, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Annual Educational Services IN THE METHODIST CHURCH—SERMON BY REV. W. W. BREWER—ADDRESS BY THE REV. JOHN READ.

*The annual educational services were held in the Methodist Church Sunday morning and evening. In the morning the Rev. W. W. Brewer, preached the annual sermon, taking for his text the 10th and 11th verses of the 2nd chapter of Proverbs.

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and wisdom is pleasant unto thee, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee."

Education, said the Rev. gentleman in opening his discourse, had become a theme so trite, that he feared the mere mention of it would cause a lack of interest which was usually shown by the congregation; but all world agree with him that no age is so noble as that which is the most advanced in the march of civilization. Education and liberty go hand in hand. Rome was once free and great, and from Gaul and Britain to the remotest plains of Asia her conquering legions marched. She was then educated. Eloquence lingered upon her lips and her poetry dropped as softly as the kisses of love. National liberty has kept pace with national education. Educated John Hampden raised his voice alone against the royal right of taxation, and at his voice ten thousand swords flashed into the air and ten thousand men said, "We will have our rights." The signers of the Declaration of Independence were classical scholars and educated men. The decree has gone forth that man shall be educated and enlightened and it shall not be revoked. Vain is everything else; they shall be swept away. Our public schools are a center of intellectual sunlight; and they are shedding these rays of light upon thousands of young minds and giving them knowledge to act well such part as may become their station in life. It becomes our citizens to guard well their interests—to guard well this light and lighthouse. They should resent anything that would tamper or interfere with it or any use that it might be put to for the purpose of securing political or ecclesiastical ends. Then came the view of the moral power of our schools and under this point there was much angry discussion. He had read the school law and the course of instruction carefully, and he could say that our public schools were backward of national strength. They are not sectarian or denominational, but give a high code of morality and a proper reverence for things holy. The Lord's prayer is heard in our schools. You, as a protestant, would not like to have your children go to a school taught by a Roman Catholic, and of course you cannot expect that they would like to have their

children taught by a Protestant teacher, where he would receive a training in the principles of that religion. The Rev. gentleman then paid a tribute to our public schools, coupling with it a graceful and complimentary reference to the ability and care of the teachers, and said that the school system was an essential to and the preserver of the knowledge, the prosperity and intellectually of the country. Great advantage with regard to the Methodist Church he said her best time. Every minister requires special knowledge and therefore a college was needed. It was necessary that they should keep up with the times and the advance of science and knowledge, in order that the church might obtain any advantage to be derived from them. Great advantage had been made lately, and Christianity and knowledge should always go hand in hand. To do this the ministers of the church must have an acquaintance with and discipline in the ways of knowledge, and a church which has no educational institution must send their young men to those of some other denomination, and in the next generation they will find that their children have gone over to that faith, as a result. The fact that the church has no educational institution must send their young men to those of some other denomination, and in the next generation they will find that their children have gone over to that faith, as a result. The fact that the church has no educational institution must send their young men to those of some other denomination, and in the next generation they will find that their children have gone over to that faith, as a result.

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