

The Fountain of Life and the River.

BY REV. ALEXANDER MACLEAREN, D. D.

"God loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3: 16.

I suppose many of you, like me, kneared these words at your mother's knees, and have been familiar with them all your lives. Perhaps familiarity has dimmed their wonderful meaning. The child that knows them knows more than, with out them, the wisest could have conceived, or heaven, with all its angels, have expected. They are inexhaustible, and one shrinks from taking them as a text. And yet, though that my poor paraphrase can only weaken them, they contain so fully and completely the message which it is my desire to press upon your acceptance that I venture to do it. If I might fall back upon a metaphor, we have here the fountain of life, the love of God; the stream, the gift of Christ; the act of drinking, "whosoever believeth"; and the life giving effects of the draught.

These great words begin in the heart of God; they end with a quickened world, and the links between the beginning and the ending are, on the Divine side, Christ, and on the human, faith.

I ask you, then, to look, first, at the fountain-head, the universal love of God.

"God . . . loved the world." In these words there is a wonderful, wonderful apocalypse of the Divine nature that has been or shall be made. One knows not who or what is the more stupendous, that God loves, or that He loves the world.

"God loves." Where, outside of Christianity, does any body dare to say that as a certainty? Men have hoped it; men have feared that it could not be; men have dimly dreamed and strongly doubted; men have had gods cruel, gods lustful, gods capricious, gods good-natured, gods indifferent or apathetic, but a loving God is the discovery of Christianity. Neither the gross deities of heathenism, nor the shadowy God of Theism, nor the unknown somewhat which, perhaps, makes for righteousness, of our modern agnostics, presents anything like this—"God loved."

Do not let us be afraid of attributing the likeness of human emotions to the Divine Being, nor be frightened from accepting the whole blessed consolation and enlightenment which lies in this wonderful thought by any anxious warnings lest we degrade the Divine nature by supposing it to be altogether like ourselves. The spectrum has taught us that the metals in the sun are absolutely identical with the metals in this earth. Christianity teaches us that since man is Deiform, made in the Divine image, we have the right to argue the other way, and say that God and man are sufficiently alike to make it perfectly reverent and safe for us to believe "that there is in God that which answers to love in us"; separated, purified, indeed from limitations, removed from the possibility of chill and change, but yet alive with all the sweetness, with all the capacity for affording rest to another heart which we find in human love at its best.

We speak of that great Divine nature as being infinite, and that is as a word; as being eternal, and that is as a tremendous and sometimes a chilling thought; as being infinitely righteous; as wielding almighty power. But all these things that men call Divine attributes are but the fringe of His character, the halo round the orb, of which the central blaze is love. The only way by which a poor, finite, sinful heart can venture to grasp the awful thoughts that lie in these great words Infinite, Eternity, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Purity, is to regard them as characteristics of love, and say, "Yes! God's love is infinite, is eternal, is omnipotent, is omniscient, is all righteous and pure."

But then, on the other side, we have not only the revelation of the heart of God, but we have the wonderful world which declares the universality of the sweep of that love. "God loved the world."

Now, I want you to observe particularly that this designation of the object upon which the Divine love rested and eternally to be interpreted according to the usage of this Gospel, and that usage distinctly gives to the expression "the world" not only the meaning of the total of humanity, but also the further meaning of humanity separated by its own evil from God. And so we get, not only the statement of the universality of the love of God, but also this great truth, that no sin nor unworthiness nor unfaithfulness nor rebellion, nothing which degrades humanity even to its lowest depths, and seems all but to extinguish the spark within it that is capable of being fanned into a flame, has the least power to deflect, turn back, or alter the love of God. That love falls upon "the world," the mass of men who have wrenched themselves away from Him, but cannot wrench Him away from themselves. They may not prevent His love from pouring itself over them, even as the bright waters of the ocean will break over some grim rock, black in the sunshine. No, brethren, all the outcasts, criminals, barbarians, degraded people that the world consents to regard as irredeemably bad and hopeless, are all grasped in His love. And you, and I, and every soul of man, have a place there; and my sins and your sins do not prevent His love from circling about us, and longing after us, and wanting to bless us and bring us back to Himself. "God loves the world," the whole mass of sinful men. Do you believe that? Do you believe it yourself?

We lose in the depth of our love in proportion as it gains in breadth, and the sentiment, when it comes to be spread over a race, is very different from what we find in the whole, we lose sight of the individuals. But there are no classes or masses with God, and when the Bible tells us that He loves the world, that does not mean that divided sentiment that grasps the whole and is almost oblivious of the individuals, as it would be with us. But He loves the world because He loves each unit that composes it. Just as in the heavens each star is set in its place, and all are included in the great arch that sweeps above them, and yet each is separate.

The glorious sky, embracing all, like life the Maker's love, Wherewith, encompassed, great and small, In peace and joy we move, He loves all because He loves each. He

Under the Catalpa.

BY REV. THEODORE L. OUTLER.

In The Evangelist for October 22nd, I narrated the incident of a blunt and fervent minister who was assigned to a very irregular parish in England, and he told the people that "they might set themselves in array against the Gospels as they chose, but before this time twelve hundred souls will be converted here; I have asked this of the Lord, and He has given it to me." I learned this incident from Mr. Spurgeon, who cited it to show how God often rewards the fidelity of earnest men of faith who undertake difficult duties in reliance upon Him. An excellent Presbyterian brother in Montana refers to this incident, and writes to me: "I have often debated the question in my mind as to how far we have a right to assume that we can depend upon and guarantee results." Mr. Spurgeon was right in commending the confident faith of that bold and blunt minister; and the Montana brother is right also in doubting the wisdom of predicting blessings which God, as sovereign, may not see fit to bestow. There is an error to be avoided on both sides. We ought not to distrust God when we are doing our duty in His service; and we have no right to "guarantee results" that are beyond our control. Many an evangelist has brought their truly prophetic, but predicted results that never came. An eminent evangelist once commenced a series of meetings in this neighborhood, and said to me, "I am as sure of a blessing on my labors as I am that the sun will rise to-morrow." But the labors of that evangelist proved to be as barren as the east wind.

After a long pastoral experience and frequent labors in revivals, I confess that there is much that is utterly mysterious in regard to them. Our God is a sovereign. He bestows spiritual blessings where He pleases, how He pleases, and where He pleases. He often seems to withhold His converting power at the very time when, according to our fallible calculations, we ought to expect it. Never in my whole life have I arranged any peculiar measures to produce a revival which have been successful; and few attempts ended in disappointment. On the other hand, several copious showers of heavenly blessings have descended when I was not expecting them. The first revival that ever gladdened my youthful ministry began at a time of deep discouragement in my little church; it began, too, in the single act of a goodly woman. The most remarkable work of grace that I have enjoyed was in the Lafayette avenue church, and that commenced during the "Week of Prayer" in 1865. No extraordinary efforts had been made, no outside help had been sought, and no peculiar expectations of any special work of grace were discernible.

By Montana brother, and to every other pastor or missionary, I would venture to suggest that it is not wise to be talking too much about "a revival"; and it is presumptuous to predict one. Lay hold of your heaven appointed work of preaching the whole Gospel—especially the new birth in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that commenced during the "Week of Prayer" in 1865. No extraordinary efforts had been made, no outside help had been sought, and no peculiar expectations of any special work of grace were discernible.

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Trust in themselves, those who would pursue the heavenly way may faint and be weary, and even utterly discouraged, because they may be true of heart. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength," even till equal to any demand of a high and holy calling. The hindrances and difficulties in the way of godliness are many and great, and well might there be despair as to overcoming them, but for the assurances given that sufficient help will be afforded in every time of need. The requirement is to "follow on to know the Lord," and attempted compliance therewith should be in the strength of Him, a knowledge of whom is desired, and while thus making the all-important attempt, the way will surely be prepared for advancement therein. Those thus striving for the mastery of the greatest difficulties, will be prepared for the way of ways, so as to successfully pursue it to the desired end, than which no end is more desirable. Thus may be realized in blessed experience the fulfillment of the promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee; and My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Full reliance may be placed upon the same power which enables the sun to rise every morning to dawn, so that all hindrances can be overcome by those who avail themselves of the Helper with whom nothing is too hard. All will be made possible and practicable to those who go on in the strength of the Lord God, and they can have a positive assurance when he could say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The way may not always seem light to them, for the sun is sometimes overclouded while shining just as much as ever, and though unseen, his course is none the less onward. So their way may appear dark, by reason of "thick clouds in the sky" of their experience, and they may seem to be making no progress; but there may be much progress, nevertheless. The sun may be under a cloud, and still be shining "more and more."—Watchman.

"K. D. C." is "worth its weight in gold," "sell like hot cakes," "all it is recommended," "an excellent remedy," and "the best dyspepsia remedy ever offered to the public." See testimonials.

By the way, when I visited the noble Museum of Natural History on Central Park, New York, the other day, I was surprised to find so few persons there. Mr. Morris K. Jesup's immense collection of the same wood of America is known to stir the pride in every Yankee's veins; for our arboreal products extend from the pines of Maine to the cocoon and the guava of the tropics. In the ornithological department I found no specimen of the owl that the eagle will devour, "I saw one" sent me by a friend from Wisconsin. He stares at me to-night with solemn wisdom, from my study mantle-piece, as I listen to the howlings of the storm through the old Catalpa. The sturdy tree has withstood the blasts of fifty winters, and will survive to crown fifty more if no vandal hands are laid on it. There is—or was not long ago—a venerable catalpa in Gray's Inn gardens, London, that is said to have been planted by Lord Bacon. A flower

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