

Pastor and People.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

ANOTHER WONDERFUL HYMN AND ITS GENESIS.

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"MY FAITH LOOKS UP TO THEE."

Dr. Ray Palmer, besides being a noted preacher for forty years, and a graceful writer for about half that time, is a poet of no mean order. His is the gift in a remarkable degree of infusing a spirit of tenderness into his lines and clothing even his commonplaces with a solemn beauty which is itself poetic. We quote the following as characteristic:

My angel mother! Long, long years have gone
Since thou, yet young and fair, passed from my sight.

E'er since, I see thy gentle face each day
And in the silent night, and still there play,
In those soft eyes, the self-same smiles that made
Thy presence a deep joy in days of yore.

But, though Dr. Palmer has written much both as a divine and a poet, we believe that this one hymn, struck out in some glorious hour of spiritual exaltation, will do more to preserve his name from sinking into oblivion than all his other writings put together—that when those will be laid upon the shelf as having served their day, this, like a crystal stream revealing itself by a green belt of vegetation amid the desert sands, will live and minister to the devotions of thousands yet unborn. The same may be said of Charles Wesley's *Jesus, lover of my soul*, or Pertonet's *All hail the power of Jesus' name*, or Heber's *From Greenland's icy mountains*, or Charlotte Elliot's *Just as I am*. It is plain that Toplady regarded his peerless hymn, *Rock of Ages*, as a mere trifle in comparison with his six great controversial volumes on Calvinism versus Arminianism; but where are all those volumes now, great as the end was which they accomplished in their day? They have shrunk into small space and, to a great extent, are forgotten, whereas this hymn is heard in almost every church, on the lonely sea, in many a cottage home, from the lips of childhood and from the faltering accents of old age. The same may be said, though not to the same extent, of the hymn under consideration. Dr. Ray Palmer will hereafter be known, not by his books, not by "What is Truth?" "Remember Me, or the Holy Communion," "Closet Hours," "Doctrinal Text book," etc.; but as the author of

My faith looks up to Thee.

What a mighty power such a hymn as this is in the hands of that good Spirit that leads into all truth, and whose promise it is to take of the things of Christ and show them to the soul! Who will undertake to write the history of this or any one of the great hymns of the Church? Who can speak of the hearts that have been warmed by the service of song in the house of the Lord—the hopes that have been stirred full of immortality—the purposes that have been fortified—the comfort that has been imparted—the quickening, freshening influences that have come down upon the congregation when this or that great hymn has been the vehicle of their devotions? The writer can never forget the effect produced in one of Moody's meetings in Glasgow some years ago when the hymn, *What means this eager anxious throng?* was sung by that great master of song, Ira D. Sankey. Strong men, men of culture and refinement and high intelligence that had left their offices at mid-day—that had torn themselves away from their worldly engagements that they might be present at the noon meeting—that could listen to Moody or any other preacher unaffected, were solemnized, impressed, moved, even to tears, by the pathos of the great charmer, especially by the lines:

Too late, too late, will be the cry,
Jesus of Nazareth hath passed by.

The hymn will often do what the sermon cannot do, and I have no doubt that Moody and Sankey could bear ample testimony to this fact. I mean the quickening power of song in the hands of Him who hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound those which are mighty, and base things, and things despised . . . that no flesh should glory in His presence. We have only room for one instance: On a quiet Sabbath eve the little country church in Mr. Moody's own town was crowded and a large number was outside; so Mr. Sankey placed his organ outside also that all might hear. Across the river a mile away, sat in the doorway of his own house a man full of rage with wife and daughter who had gone to the village to hear that fanatic Moody. By-and-bye there were wafted across the meadow and up the hill-side, borne on the evening breeze, the touching strains of *There were ninety and nine*. Those strains penetrated the steeled heart, broke down every barrier, and there alone in the deepening darkness came light and peace—in short a revelation! Now there were songs in the night instead of storms of passion! Every hymn has a history—a wonderful history

which eternity alone will unfold; and so with the hymn,

My faith looks up to Thee,

but on that we cannot enter, further than to raise the question as to its *genesis*. How came it into being? Was it the child of some calm meditative hour, or the cogitation of some philosophic mood, laboriously worked out, or the flash of a divine inspiration? Hear how Dr. Palmer himself answers the question. When asked for the origin of this, his first and best hymn, he replied: "It was written because it was born in my heart and demanded expression. I gave form to what I felt, by writing with little effort the stanzas. I wrote them with very tender emotion, and ended the last lines with tears." At the time he wrote this hymn he was a young man, living in New York, with his future still undefined, though studying for the ministry. It appears from a sketch of his life that he spent a year in that city, and while there enjoyed the ministrations of Mr. Nettleton, of the Brick Church, and enjoyed them greatly. His biographer does not say that it was under this preacher he was moved to write the hymn, but we are led to this inference from the connection; and we can easily understand how, under the *affluens*—the impression made on his sensitive mind by the preacher—the hymn would be born and, as he says, *demand expression*.

God gave a great gift to the Church on the day (12th November, 1808, Rhode Island, Compton) Ray Palmer was born, for if he had done nothing but write this hymn, he has ministered to thousands that will rise up and call him blessed. He is still with us; but though the snows of seventy-seven winters are on his head, his eye is not dim, because full of the hope of immortality, and ere long it shall see the King in His beauty, and the land that is afar off, and rejoice.

MY FAITH LOOKS UP TO THEE.

My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Saviour divine;
Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away;
O let me from this day
Be wholly Thine!

May Thy rich grace impart
Strength to my fainting heart,
My zeal inspire;
As Thou hast died for me,
O may my love to Thee
Pure, warm and changeless be,
A living fire.

While life's dark maze I tread,
And griefs around me spread,
Be Thou my guide;
Bid darkness turn to day,
Wipe sorrow's tears away,
Nor let me ever stray
From Thee aside.

When ends life's transient dream,
When death's cold sullen stream
Shall o'er me roll,
Blest Saviour, then in love,
Fear and distrust remove;
O bear me safe above,
A ransomed soul.

We give a Latin translation—same measure as the English—of this modern hymn to give it the flavour of antiquity, the odour of mediæval times:

Fides vertit Tibi,
O Agne Calvarie,
O Lux Mundi;
Audito dum orem
Auferto me labem,
Misericors, omnem,
Hinc sim Tibi.

O sint opes tue
Labente me fusce,
Agentes me!
Tu quia mortuus,
O mihi semper lux
Divæ ardens, vivax,
Delectans Te!

Dum ambulans cecus,
Vias, obnoxius,
Dirigito.
Fer luce tenebras,
Absterge lacrymas,
Et semper venias
Auxilio.

Quum finis omnium—
Quum vitæ somnium
Evanuit;
Amore in tuo,
Omnes metus ferto,
Hinc meos ituro
In gloriam.

A COUNTRY'S best defence is its good men.

CULTIVATE forbearance till you heart yields a fine crop of it. Pray for a short memory as to all unkindnesses.

THE CLAIMS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

BY PRINCIPAL KING, MANITOBA COLLEGE.

In estimating the claims of the Christian ministry, the first consideration which it is important to take into account is that it is an institution of Jesus Christ. No one doubts that the New Testament Church, as an organized body, is His institution. It may, therefore, well occasion surprise that the doubt should have arisen, whether the ministry likewise is His appointment—that the opinion should be entertained that the setting apart of a class of men for the special work of teaching and enforcing His truth and of exercising rule in His Church is without any Scriptural warrant. It is difficult to believe that the Church of Christ in all its branches has from the beginning onward so far misapprehended His will. For, it will be observed, we are not left to argue the propriety of the institution from considerations of a general kind, drawn from the obvious necessities of the case, though in the absence of direct authority, these would have almost as certainly led to the establishment of the Christian ministry, as its undeniable benefits abundantly justify its maintenance. Given on the one hand, the truth of Christ as a sacred deposit with His Church, and on the other, multitudes of human beings, at once ignorant of it and needing it, an order of men must have inevitably been called into existence, charged with the duty of communicating and enforcing it. But the matter is not one of human expediency simply, or indeed, at all—it is one resting on direct appointment. The ministry by which the Church of Christ is served is the institution of its Divine Head. "He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ." Some of these offices, that of the apostle in particular, were from their very nature temporary, perhaps even incapable of perpetuation, when the circumstances had passed away, to which their peculiar character was due; others of them are as obviously permanent. The need of the pastor and teacher, if not also of the evangelist, is just as great in our day, as it was when the Apostle of the Gentiles penned the letter to the Ephesian Church from which these words are taken. And it is only in accordance with what we might have anticipated, that He who makes the Church's interests His peculiar care should both have established the office at the first and should have raised up from time to time faithful and pious men to fill it. "Most of our Lord's public life," it has been well said, "was spent in doing the work Himself or in preparing His disciples for it. Much of the New Testament is engaged in describing it or its results. In three epistles it is the sole theme, and is never far away in any." With the instructions to Titus to "ordain elders in every city," that among other duties they might be able "by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers," with the similar and even more explicit instruction to Timothy: "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," with Paul's words to the elders of the Ephesian Church, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood," it implies a large faculty of shutting the eyes to unwelcome truth for men who are familiar with their Bibles to declare that the Christian ministry is an institution destitute of divine authority—to maintain that the Scriptures do not contemplate as a permanent arrangement the choice by the Christian people, and the ordination of a body of men to teach and to rule within the Church of Christ. It ought to be stated, however, that it could scarcely have been the design of Christ in instituting a regular ministry to reduce to silence the Christian people, or to supersede that duty of "edifying one another" and exhorting one another, which is so often inculcated in Scripture. One need not hesitate to express the conviction that it was never intended by the Saviour that the whole religious life of a congregation, whether large or small, should find its sole expression through the lips of any one man, however gifted and pious. Yet to this it has often come, in whole sections of the Christian Church and for long periods, and religion has proportionately suffered and not least through the opposite extreme—the disallowance of a stated ministry altogether—into which some good people, with more warmth of emotion than breadth of view, have been thereby thrown.

It is matter for thankfulness that in our day the expression of religious truth and of Christian sentiment by the body of the Christian people is rather encouraged than repressed. The ministry certainly has nothing to fear from it; on the contrary, it may well enough measure its own success by the amount of natural and truthful articulate testimony on behalf of Christ and His Gospel which it can evoke from those among whom it is exercised. But its own proper and distinctive character, as a divine institution, will still stand out, its functions not superseded by the voiceful life of the Christian people, rather rendered in some respects more necessary than ever.