

The Provincial Wesleyan

Published under the direction of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of Eastern British America.

Volume XXIV.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1872.

Number 50

THE INSPIRATION OF A GREAT PRESENCE.

BY A. C. GEORGE, D. D.

"I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect."—Gen. 17: 1.

Whatever resources we may have within ourselves, we are more or less affected by the presence and power of others. Great minds, especially, awe, excite, and uplift our souls. The Infinite Mind, therefore, must be a source of unending life and inspiration. The Divine presence must always be a quickening influence to create capacities. "I am the Almighty God," or "God all-sufficient," as Bush renders the Hebrew. All life, power, blessing, completeness, fullness, are in him in infinite sufficiency; so that he can perfectly satisfy all the necessities of his creatures, in all possible unfolding of their powers, and through the whole period of their duration. He is a God of rich, abundant and immeasurable resources.

And God's first requirement is that we should discern his presence, that we should recognize and order our ways so as to please him, and that each one of his creatures should realize the poet's aspiration—

"As ever in my great Taskmaster's eye."

And in order that we may come to know him, God has not only revealed himself in all his works, from every blade of grass and every flower beneath our feet to the stars which glow resplendently in the heavens above our heads, but he has also wrought within us a quick and strong sense of the need of the infinite, so that our souls perpetually yearn for the unseen, the unattained and the inexhaustible.

Mrs. Livermore is said to be the author of these two memorable sentences: "A Divine discontent must pursue all human lives;" and "Life is lonely to every soul." And Dr. Thomas Chalmers, on one occasion exclaimed: "What a wilderness this world is to the heart, with all it has to inspire happiness; and he adds, 'What a marvellous solitude every man bears about him; and then that other and mysterious seclusion, the intervening veil between us and the Deity.' Now who does not realize that there is something in the human soul which finds no creature companionship, and which therefore makes life lonely, even amidst the throng of great cities, and excites that 'discontent' of which Mrs. Livermore speaks? How many idiosyncrasies of life and eccentricities of conduct have their root in that 'marvellous solitude every man bears about him,' and into which the world came of enter? Did any one ever look at a flower, and think how it came up out of the cold earth, or gaze on the clayey yet lovely features of a dead child, marveling whether its little life had gone, without a certain sense of loneliness? Can one behold the ocean in its vastness, or lose himself in the limitless prairie, or roam through the infinite heavens finding no bounds, and not be oppressed and overwhelmed? The truth is, that in all our experiences of nature, of life, of death, we do constantly pass beyond the domain of the finite, and come into a realm vast, solitary, dreadful, except as it is filled with the light and glory of the Divine presence.

To walk before God, then, in his conscious awareness, in the realization of his love, in the knowledge of his Fatherly care and blessing, in the mysterious fellowship of his infinite nature, is to find a fullness, a companionship, and a sufficiency, which nothing but the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ever makes a reality in any human experience. Henceforth the solitude is filled by one glorious presence, and the loneliness is cheered by voices such as make melody in heaven.

To those who walk before God, the upright-ness, sincerity and completeness which the Gospel requires, come to be realizations, almost in the way of natural consequences. That is, it is one will set God always before him, he will be self-denying, honest, pure, devoted, even without deliberation, by the Divine presence, as one who has the light of the sun. If the heaven of his soul glows with the manifest God, his virtues and graces will spring up like grass and flowers in the Spring time, and will come to ripeness and maturity like the golden grain of Summer. Integrity is what is required of us—that is, a whole and not a fractional life; and, as Bush has said, "Integrity is true Scriptural perfection, and without that everything is defective, and all profession vain."

"Noah," we are told, "was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God;" and because he walked with God, he was just in character, and perfect in his generation. His obedience was not hypocritical, but sincere; not partial, but complete; not flimsy, but constant; not formal, but fervent; not deficient, in a word, but perfect. And such is ever the character of the obedience inspired by the consciousness of the Divine presence.

When commenting on Matthew 5: 48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect," says: "Neither St. Paul nor St. James expected that the Christians they addressed would be perfect like angels, or even ideally perfect men; nor perfect performers of God's absolute law. But they did expect that the law of love might possess a perfect power in their hearts, and in that would consist the perfected character of their piety." And if the law of love—a law which lives and operates and governs only in the light and under the sanction of the recognized presence of God—does possess a perfect power in the heart, then our repentance will be deep and thorough and our abstinence of sin strong and constant; and then our consecration to Christ and his work will be complete and perpetual. It is reported of Charles XII. of Sweden that, when he acceded the throne, he wrote on a map of Sweden: "God has given me this kingdom, and the devil shall not take it away from me." In like manner we shall be able, if the law of love rules in our hearts, to write on body, soul and possessions: "These are Christ's and neither self nor Satan shall pervert them to base and unholiness." Then, too, faith will grasp all the promises of the Inspired Word, and rely with fullest confidence on the covenant love of God. Then the choice of God's way and

work will be cheerful and absolute. Then all malice will be expelled from the heart; and goodness, kindness, forbearance, patience and resignation will dwell there, like angels. Then service and sacrifice for Jesus and his cause, will be rather sought than shunned. The hope will be exultant, the victory over sin and Satan constant, and the confident assurance of a final triumph over death and hell, an abiding and glorious experience.—*Central Advocate*, St. Louis, Nov. 8, 1872.

THE IMPRECATORY PSALMS.

In the earlier stage of our Christian experience, as many other doubtless have done, we turned by these imprecatory Psalms to those more congenial to our hearts. We have wondered a thousand times that this feature of a portion of the Bible, so much admired, is not often explained. We do not now remember of ever having heard a sermon preached on the subject, or to have seen a newspaper article.

In the consideration of this subject we remark: 1. That the language used by the Psalmists is poetic, and highly figurative. By "let burning coals fall upon them," &c., no more can be meant than that they should be overwhelmed in the ruin they had planned for others. If a magazine should be prepared to blow up a family or town, so one would think it unmerciful or unjust to turn the instrument of death upon the heads of those who had plotted mischief to others. This is precisely what the Psalmist prays for: "Into the very pit which they digged for others, let them fall themselves."

2. Let it be remembered that, in all these prayers, it is quite certain that the imprecation was uttered entirely in subordination to the will of God. If any other plan more in accordance with mercy, to accomplish the end in view, could be devised, it was the desire of the Psalmist that it should be done. So far as David is concerned, this view is proved beyond a doubt, by the mercy he exhibited toward his enemies during his entire life. On two different occasions the life of Saul was in his hands, and at both times he resolutely restrained his men from executing vengeance. When he heard of the death of this worthless monarch, he was filled with grief. A more daring and traitorous plot was never laid against a government, than that of which Absalom was the author. Yet when this revolutionary scheme was overthrown by the sudden death of this aspiring youth, David's heart was well-nigh broken. O Absalom, my son, my son, would God I had died for thee!"

There is but one instance in his whole history where even the show of malice is discernible. This was the result of haste, when he received a base insult from Nabal of Carmel on the occasion of his sheep shearing. After listening to the scold words of Abigail, he acknowledged, with shame, his hasty and unjustified spirit, and said to her, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand."

3. Consider, in the next place, that the maledictions invoked in the Psalms in question, were upon the basest enemies of God and humanity. We think it will appear to all, that personal spite was far removed from David's spirit. Therefore, these prayers for vengeance were in simple recognition of a fact exemplified in the history of the world in every age, that sooner or later, the wrath of God will overtake the wicked. And not only this, but the cup will be prepared with the same bitter ingredients that was pressed to the lips of others. The Babylonians smote the Chaldeans, overwhelming their cities, and laying waste their fields and fruitful vineyards. The Babylonians, in process of time, shared the same fate at the hands of the Persians. When the Persians' cup of iniquity was full, the Romans came down upon them like a mighty avalanche, bringing terror in their train, and burying them in utter ruin. The fate of the Romans is familiar to every school-girl. Disturbed by intestine wars, broken into factions, they finally became weak, and their mighty power, which had made the world tremble at every tread, was forever gone! God was in all this.

Now, let any one study the retributions of God—whose ways cannot be criticized, however much they may differ from our notions—remembering, at the same time, the relation of the Psalmists as prophets of the Almighty, and he will not see any incongruity between the prayers for the overthrow of the wicked and the Spirit of Christianity. It is in exact harmony with the teachings of Christ and the Apostles. It would not be well for ordinary Christians to adopt these maledictions as a precedent, when persecuted by the ungodly, as this was sharply rebuked by the Master, when the disciples suggested a rain of fire upon the stolid Samaritans. Yet Jesus plainly declared, "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." We may settle down upon the fact, that God never rebukes in judgment, where mercy can be safely exercised. As the wisest and best men are not able to distinguish when punishment is indispensable, the wisest is mine; I will repay, said the Lord.—*From Ladies' Repository for December*.

HARLAN PAGE.

BY REV. LEWIS B. DUNN.

There is nothing which the church so much needs at the present time as individual effort for the salvation of souls. Of numbers there is no lack, of wealth there is an abundance, and opportunities and appliances for usefulness are multiplied beyond any precedent. But a very large portion of the membership of all our churches are doing really nothing to save immortal souls from the perdition of ungodly men. And it is truly wonderful that it is so. Professedly we do, to believe the great varieties of the Bible, which proclaim the fearful character and consequences of sin, which tell of a heaven of glory for the righteous, and a hell of endless woe for the sinner and the ungodly, we often

act as if they were only idle tales. Hence many who have for years professed to be Christians have never made one real, earnest effort "to convert a sinner from the error of his ways." There is evidently a great lack somewhere. It may be in the want of a clear experience, of a deep conviction of the truth of the word of God, or of a conscious responsibility, so far as in us lies, for the salvation of our fellow-men; but from whatever cause produced, the state of things referred to is an alarming extent. It is in view of this that I would call attention to the "Memoir of Harlan Page," as furnishing one of the brightest illustrations in modern times of personal effort for the salvation of souls, as showing the great principles which impelled him onward in the discharge of this duty, and as encouraging others to imitate his illustrious example, by the grand and glorious success which crowned his efforts. The only son of pious parents, he was not converted until he was over twenty-two years of age; but as soon as he had experienced the saving grace of God, he began his life-long labors for the souls of his fellow-men. When on his dying bed he said, "When I first obtained a hope I felt that I must labor for souls. I prayed year after year that God would make me the means of saving souls."

He did not feel that he was called to preach the Gospel in the higher sense of that calling. He felt that, as a Christian, it was his duty to do all in his power to bring souls to Christ. He had only a good common education, and learned the trade of a house-joiner or carpenter, from his father. For twelve years after his conversion he either toiled at his trade, or taught school for the support of himself and his family; and for the last nine years of his eventful life he acted as depository for the American Tract Society. But, wherever or however employed, the burden of souls pressed upon his heart, and for their salvation he labored with untiring industry and unquenchable zeal. His remuneration for his services was so small that it required his constant exertions to earn bread for his family. And yet, although his constitution was frail and delicate, he never allowed a day or a week to pass by without some effort to save a soul.

The means which he employed were writing letters, distributing tracts, teaching in or superintending a Sabbath-school, holding neighborhood prayer-meetings, most efficient of all, personal conversation with those around him on the great question of their peace with God. The numerous letters which he wrote to unconverted persons are the very models of personal exhortation and appeal. Plain, but toned with the precious love of Jesus, his words were full of grace and truth, and produced lasting impressions and convictions. In addition to the means already named, he always had by him a list of names of persons to be converted with a view to be prayed for. "It is wonderful," says his biographer, "that God should bless his efforts; that in every church with which he was connected individuals in relating their experience should refer to his faithful endeavors as the means of their conversion. 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