

Original Contributions.

THE ATTRACTION OF CALVARY.

VI.

T. H. BLENUS.

(Concluded.)

The cross of Calvary attracts because, as nothing else does or can, it reveals God. It conceals, while it unveils his glory. We see God only by the rays which converge in Calvary.

I go out at noonday, and lifting my eyes to heaven, dare, for five brief minutes to gaze upon the unclouded sun; and I am smitten with blindness for my temerity; but by and by there is seen in the western sky a hand-like cloud shooting straight from horizon to zenith and spreading its black wings northward and southward like an avenging spirit, wrapping the earth in a mantle of wrath. And now from the eastern sky there comes another, black as the banner of night, rushing like a war-horse to the charge. They meet in mid-air, with the roar of thunder, and the gleam and flash of forked lightning that sets the heavens ablaze. Borne on the tempest's breath are rain and hail, that come like a deluge on land and sea; and anon, when the storm is hushed, when the sun glowing like a ball of fire, hangs suspended over the western hills, while the hoarse thunder is dying away in the distance, and the cloud, like the banner of a retreating army, is slowly ascending the distant mountain, there, on its departing folds the sun has imaged himself in the glory of the rainbow. I gaze upon it with eye undimmed. I drink in its wondrous beauty. I am entranced with its splendor. The noonday glories are diluted and accommodated to my organ of vision. Thus is it with God. No man hath seen him at any time. We could not behold him and live. And so God has shrouded his glories in the person of his incarnate Son. He set him down amid the toils and trials and tears of humanity, and bid us see the Godhead shining through. See in the words he spake, in the miracles he wrought, and in the life he lived, the thought and purpose and glory of God. And then on the cross of Calvary he gathered up all of beauty and of glory that the human eye could bear, or the human heart could endure, and through its pain and death and darkness he has proclaimed that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." This is the glory of the cross, and the power of the attraction of Calvary: it reveals God, and revealing him saves man. Here is a sun that never sets, a tie that never breaks, a power that never wanes. For more than eighteen centuries it has been scattering the mists of prejudice, lifting the veil of ignorance, crushing the power of hate, and wresting adherents from the ranks of its enemies. The man! How it elevates the entire man, how it enlightens the mind, convinces the judgment, purifies the affections, sanctifies the will, concentrates the energies of soul and body, for time and for eternity to God.

"The world"—How blessed the promise: prince or beggar, sage or savage. Out from the cross to-day is going a power that is grappling with all hearts. It claims all souls as legitimate empire. They are his by right of purchase. He moves upon them now for conquest. Already its victories are marvelous. It is lifting Christians out of their denominational littleness and narrowness and strife into the largeness and broadness of Christian sympathy. It has lifted nations out of barbarism, savagery and slavery into the culture and liberty of Christian civilization. It is lifting them out of fraud and oppression and wrong into the rights and privileges of the highest manhood. Calvary is revealing the beauty of holiness, the sublimity of truth, the divinity of love, the grandeur of man, and the glory of God. It is attracting the gaze of the world. It is binding to itself the hearts of the nations; until by and by, the last sinner lifted from his sins and allied to his God, the universe shall swing about the cross of Calvary as its centre for ever and ever.

BEGINNING TO SPEAK.

ACTS II. 4.

NEIL M'LEOD.

How much has been done by speech! God spake and it was done. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. God said, Let there be light and there was light. And in these last days God has spoken to us by his Son. By his spoken word God created the world, and by his own word he regenerated it. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Thus it behooved the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Perhaps the most wonderful endowment bestowed upon man by the Creator, is the power of speech. Certainly no other power of man has been so widely and variously used in all business affairs. Speech is the medium of intelligent communication between God and men, and between all nations of men. It is not therefore strange, that when God would show us the way of salvation, his messengers began to speak as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. And when Peter was sent for by Cornelius, it was that he should tell him words whereby he and his household should be saved. And so in the beginning He who is the Word, became flesh and dwelt among us that we should behold his glory, know his will and see the Righteous One and hear a voice from his mouth. John i. 14. Acts xxii. 14.

"And so the Word had flesh, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought."

"Which he may need that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef."

They began to speak, and men out of every nation said, We do hear them speaking in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

1. This great salvation is a divine message. To you is the word of this salvation sent. It is a royal proclamation from the throne in glory, issued by the newly crowned king, to whom has been given all authority in heaven and on earth.

2. This message is brought by the newly arrived Spirit, that came to guide his apostles into all truth, to teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance all that Christ himself had said to them. He shall not speak of himself, but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak, and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine and shall declare it to you. The medium of the Spirit's communication, first to the apostles and through them to all men, is human speech.

3. This message was spoken to the people by the apostles, newly inspired by the Spirit. As the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, so his witnesses are men in the flesh and not angels nor spirits. We are to hear the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, from the lips of men who were eyewitnesses of His majesty. We are not to look for visions and voices and dreams, but to hear the gospel of Christ and believe the testimony that God hath given concerning his Son Jesus Christ, and obey from the heart the form of teaching delivered to us.

4. This message contained the newly offered terms of salvation. It was a proclamation in the name of the King, of the conditions of pardon to all his enemies. It stated in clearest and simplest human words what we must do to be saved, and promised to the obedient the full forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

5. These terms are to be declared universal. They are for all nations and for every creature. They are therefore not limited or special. They are the same to the Jews and Gentiles. The promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. There is left, therefore, no place or need for special terms to any individuals or classes or conditions of men. God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him. The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentiles. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed.

6. This message is final. It is God's last word to the world until the judgment. It is now near two thousand years since the last messenger came from heaven to speak to men on earth. Never before in the history of the divine revelations had so long time elapsed without a word from God to his people. The reason is clear. There is no more to be said. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. He is the alpha and the omega, the first and the last. It is finished. God has done all that God can do for the world in Christ. God has said all that God can say to the world by Christ. There can be no new salvation and no new revelation. There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. He is the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by Him. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels (messengers) proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of