

CANADIAN PULPIT.

No. 63.

Strangers and Pilgrims.

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TEXT:—"For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own."—Heb. xi. 14. (R.V.) "Say such things," what things? They said "that they were



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strangers and pilgrims on the earth." We have here a description of God's people under the Old Testament dispensation. They considered themselves strangers and pilgrims on earth in their day, and it equally applies to all believers since.

We have here then two leading thoughts, 1st, the confession of God's people, and 2nd, the manifestation of that confession. They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims here. In a certain sense every man, woman and child in the world is a stranger and pilgrim upon earth. We often speak of life as a journey from the cradle to the grave. All mankind are on that journey. The little infant of days has begun the

journey, and the man of hoary hairs has almost completed it. But this wide meaning will not apply here, for while all are strangers and pilgrims in this broad sense, there is a wide difference. For example, two men enter the same train for a distant city. For the time being they are both travellers at the same rate, in the same direction, and ostensibly to the same place. Ah, but how widely different their destination! One, glad at heart is going home and expects a joyful welcome at the end of the way, while the other looks gloomily forward to spending the rest of his days in a prison to which he shall be consigned when the journey is completed. One, in freedom is travelling home, the other a criminal is being conveyed to his dungeon. So while it is true that all mankind are strangers and pilgrims on earth in a broad general sense, the statement of the text applies only to those who through faith have become heirs to a glorious immortality, and are journeying towards the better land.

The derivation of the word "stranger" shows that it means one who is out of and beyond the boundaries of his native land. For example, a Chinaman is a stranger here, he is out of and beyond the boundaries of his native country. So every believer is a stranger on earth. *This is not his native land.* He has been twice born and the second is his true birth. He was born of the earth, *earthly*, it is true, but he was born of the Spirit also, *born from above*, so that Heaven is his native land. He no longer belongs to earth, his citizenship is in heaven. He is a stranger here, heaven is his home. He not only admits the fact but acknowledges also that he is a pilgrim as well. He is journeying through a strange land. When evening comes on he may pitch his tent here or there, and tarry for the night, as Abraham did, but he has no intention of making his home there. He is ever thinking of home, and constantly journeying towards it. Like the father of the faithful, he too, is looking for a city that hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. If you meet him in the way and ask who he is, he replies:—

"I'm but a stranger here,
Heaven is my home,
Earth is a desert drear,
Heaven is my home;
Danger and sorrow stand
Round me on every hand,
Heaven is my fatherland,
Heaven is my home."

Now notice, in the second place, that the children of God not only realize and confess that they are strangers and pilgrims here, but they do something more. They *make it manifest* that they are seeking a country of their own. Our light must shine. Even the timid Nicodemus was obliged at last to come out openly. The Master says, "I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit." Why? That by bearing fruit we might make it manifest to ourselves and others that we are the children of God, cleansed in the blood of His Son, sanctified by His Spirit, and journeying toward our heavenly home. It is not sufficient to be a believer in Christ, we must confess Him

before men also, if we would make it manifest that we are seeking a better country, a country of our own. We must show the world that we are His, and that we are not so much taken up with the things of this life as to lead men to suppose that we consider this our native land. We cheerfully obey the Master's command, "Set your affections upon things above," "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." Setting apart a tithe of your income for Christian and benevolent purposes is a good antidote for worldliness.

We must make it manifest also by faithfully observing the ordinances of religion. We begin with public worship. Abel carefully observed public worship. By faith in the great sacrifice which was to come, Sabbath by Sabbath he shed the life blood of the first and best of his flock. Wherever Abraham pitched his tent, he also built an altar upon which to sacrifice unto the Lord for himself and his household. David did not neglect public worship. "I was glad" he says, "when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord," "to see Thy power and Thy glory as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary." Let us, then, be always found in our place in the House of God, in the company of His saints on His holy day, for "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

Private devotions, also, must be diligently cultivated. Daniel prayed to God three times a day, and Enoch walked with God, implying intimate fellowship and communion. David made mention of the loving kindness of the Lord in the morning, and of His faithfulness every night. He remembered God upon his bed, and meditated upon Him in the night watches. He often arose early to worship God. "My soul thirsteth for Thee," "Awake, psaltery and harp, I myself will awake early." His private devotions emphasized his great confession, "I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner as all my fathers were." Thus did these Old Testament worthies make it manifest that they were seeking a better land than Canaan, a country of their own.

The sacraments of the New Testament must be devoutly observed. Both point to Christ. God said to Abraham, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee," which covenant was sealed to him and to his seed after him in circumcision, and to us in baptism. And as the oil of a lamb blood sprinkled on the upper and side door posts saved the Israelites from the death stroke of the avenging angel, so the blood of Christ according to the terms of the everlasting covenant saves us from the death stroke of Infinite Justice. But we must attach our seal to each. God has attached His in the blood of His Son, so we must attach ours by the use of water in baptism, and by partaking of the bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Knowing our infirmities, He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Each communion season should be a resting place in our journey through the wilderness, one stage nearer home. Let us therefore observe the feast as if each observance were to be our last on earth, with the sure and certain hope, that, if not spared to observe it again here, our next will be with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God.

I need not dwell upon the necessity of making manifest by our daily walk and conversation that we are strangers and pilgrims here, seeking our own our native land, for if our hearts be right in the sight of God, our lives will be right in the sight of men. Nor need I emphasize the need of seeking daily grace for daily duty. We need to drink soul satisfying draughts from the divine source of strength and wisdom every day, in order to make daily progress in our journey through the wilderness, let us journey with our faces Zionward. Let us speak the truth and do the right though the heavens fall. The den of lions did not intimidate Daniel, nor the burning fiery furnace his three companions. Mary, Queen of Scots did not frighten the heroic Knox, nor devils incarnate the dauntless Luther. Let us fear nought but sin and serve nought but God as we journey towards our native land. Some day the journey will be complete. Some day we shall see the gates of pearl and walk the golden streets. Some day we shall gaze upon the face of Inexpressible Loveliness, and be forever with the Lord. Some day we shall meet our loved ones again in a brighter clime, where glad family reunions shall be formed never more to be broken up.

Thanks be to God, He hath prepared for us a city, a city that hath foundations, whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are praise.

"The bitter first, and then the endless sweet,
The dark rough road, and then the golden floor,
The fiery furnace, then nor sun nor heat
The Cross, and then the Crown for evermore.

Here and There a Gem.

The only way to regenerate the world is to do the duty which lies nearest us, and not to hunt after grand, far-fetched ones for ourselves. If each drop of rain chose where it should fall, God's showers would not fall as they do now.

Speak to me ever, Lord,
In accents low and sweet, let earth's turmoil be still,
That every tender word
Of Thine my spirit's inmost depths may sweetly thrill.

Love, like the opening of the heavens to the saints, shows for a moment, even to the dullest man, the possibilities of the human race. He has faith, hope and love for another being, perhaps but a creature of his imagination, still it is a great advance for a man to be profoundly loving, even in his imaginations.