

Sermon.

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Isaiah 9 : 6—"His name shall be called Wonderful," Philippians 2 : 9—"A name which is above every name."

Eighteen hundred and ninety-seven years have passed since the birthday of the "Holy Child Jesus," yet that event has lost none of its charm, nor its mystery. The end of the century, though crowded with the most extraordinary discoveries and inventions known in the history of the world, still reserves the name of Jesus, the incomparable position of being first and highest among all names. The anniversaries of the births of Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon, Washington, in the secular world; or Wickliffe, Wesley, in the religious world, or any other celebrated character of the historic past, may or may not be commemorated. But most of them have been allowed to be forgotten, though their names were associated with valorous deeds, or great reforms, that made new epochs in the history of man. But the name of Jesus gathers about it added glory and interest, so that each anniversary of His advent to earth is observed with growing popularity among the nations. We are going to enquire into the cause and evidence of the imperishableness of the annual observance of Christ's birthday. Why do hundreds of millions gather in the sanctuaries of Christendom, to sing of this event, and to hear the story of the nativity told annually? Does it not strike you as being a marvellous thing, that instead of the narration of this fact becoming wearisome and tedious with the growth of years, each anniversary only adds freshness, and force, and overflowing enthusiasm to the story of the event?

Many wonderful men have been born into this world since our Lord's birthday; men of brilliant genius, of world-wide greatness, and who have left their footprints on the sands of time. Why are not their birthdays observed by hundreds of millions, in family reunions, in joyous feasting, and remembrance of the poor? Why? Because they belong to the historic past, and all but a notable few are seldom thought of, except when the eye explores the page where their deeds are recorded. Whereas, He who was born in Bethlehem belongs to past, present and future. They are dead; He was dead, but rose again, and is alive forevermore. They are all changed; He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Their power was confined to the earth; He has all power in heaven, as well as in earth. They held the gateways of this world's domain; He has the keys of death and hell. The world is opening its eyes to behold the truth of Isaiah's statement, as fulfilled in subsequent history. The prophet's declaration, "His name shall be called Wonderful," though not the name our Lord is generally called, yet His human name, Jesus, always brings before us a character of such greatness and goodness as to justify the prophetic attribute of "Wonderful." His was a wonderful birth, for never on the advent of any other human being into this world, was a star told off by the Governor of the universe to guide enquirers to the place of His birth. Nor did ever a choir of angels come so near to earth and infant such a symphony as "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men," in connection with the birth of any other. And what a wonderful life; what volumes of marvels were crowded into the last three years of it! And His death, resurrection and ascension, were all marked by the same wonderfulness. Any student of the past nearly 1900 years history of Christianity will have to conclude that the prophet's announced title has been rightly maintained by the extraordinary achievements of the author of Christianity. And that still "His name is above every name." The wonderfulness of this name was attested in Eternity, and consummated in Time; this coming Messiah was revealed to Abraham, and foretold by his sons; it was his redemptive work that burdened the chorals of Israel's sweet singer, and was engraved in the prophecies of the royal Isaiah; 'tis this name that unlocks the symbolism of the Mosaic ritual and becomes the key to all the mysteries of the future. A fact that rends in twain the veil of the Holy of Holies, and rolls back the curtain, revealing the city of "the Great King," may well, rightly and truthfully be called "Wonderful."

This morning I propose that we make a few excursions into five great spheres, to prove by the principal products therein, that what Isaiah prophesied, and what Paul declared is true today, that the wonderful name of Jesus is still above every name. I. Prose.—In the very order of things, prose productions were naturally the first forms of expression of Christian truth. The whole of the New Testament, with the exception of the last book, (which is a kind of blank verse) is a collection of facts written down in language simple and clear, to inform man in all ages what God has done for his salvation. From this fountain of thought the early Christians drank deep draughts of inspiration. Then followed volume after volume from the quills of devout thinkers, of beautifully expressed words, embodying their ripe thoughts on this Wonderful One and His redemptive work for mankind. From the days of Paul, even in the first century A. D., men were so burdened by the greatness and glory of this Wonder-

ful Christ that they were impelled to write their thoughts upon Him. From the early fathers up to the present day, what mountains of literature have been produced relating to this Wonderful Saviour! The thought of ascertaining how many books have been written on Christian subjects is oppressive. For the task is an impossible one. If you travel through the great libraries and museums of the old world, both public and private, you will find that on the other side of the Atlantic there are 21,562,000 volumes, and on this continent there are 3,650,000 volumes, making a total of 25,212,000 volumes, besides millions of manuscripts. We all know that there are from one to two hundred millions more volumes in the homes of the people, but as the national libraries I have referred to contain a single copy of every book published on both sides of the water, the afore mentioned twenty-five millions of books represent about all the separate works published from the first century that have been obtainable. I do not know how many of these twenty-five millions of volumes are written specially on Christianity, or how many are characterized by the virtues taught by Christianity. But this I am safe in saying, that not only has the New Testament been the source of thought to more writers than any other subject, but that the books in which Christ is the central figure have done more to elevate and civilize the world than all the rest put together. And more than that, I will go so far as to say, that any book which has been written on any subject, social or scientific, political or philosophic, commercial or philanthropic, which totally ignores Christ and His teaching, the world could easily do without. This may seem a very sweeping statement to make, but so convinced am I of the non-necessity of any book that is not dominated and purified by the almighty spirit of the Christ of the ages, that I unhesitatingly avow it as my most positive opinion. That the state of the world would not only be as well advanced in all necessary civilization as it is today, but that it would be a hundred degrees nearer the millennium than it is, if it had never possessed such Christless literature. This wonderful Christ is the central figure of the ages, even as the sun is the centre of the great planetary system. And only as men borrow life and light from the Son of Righteousness will their thought be luminous and clear, strong and elevating to the uplifting of the race and the hastening of that day of universal peace. Today, millions of good books, like rays from the great source of light, are scattered among the nations. And let it not be forgotten, that from the great British and Foreign Bible Society, (which originated in the heart of the Rev. Joseph Hughes, a Baptist minister), have been sent forth up to March 31, 1897, 151,142,802 volumes, containing all or parts of the word of the Wonderful One, whose name is above every name. While the American Society have sent out 63,000,000; kindred societies, 23,000,000; private publishers, 6,000,000. Total, 297,000,000.

II. Poetry.—The next realm in which this name has always stood above every name is where the poet lives and loves to labor. We learn from Paul's epistles that the first Christians sang psalms and hymns in their meetings for worship. And it was natural for such a theme as the work of the "Wonderful One" to call forth the efforts of the poets that were in the early church. We have not many of the hymns sung by the church up to the 13th century, but what we have indicate that the "name that is above every name" now, was that around which all the grandest of poetry gathered in all ages of the Christian church. And indeed it is difficult to imagine what poets, past and present, would have done for themes for poems, if the name of Jesus had never been.

The oldest hymn which we sing is: "Welcome, happy morning! Age to age shall say! Hell to-day is vanquished, Heaven is won to-day! Lo! the dead is living, God for evermore! Him their true Creator, all his works adore!" This is one of the grand Resurrection hymns composed by Venantius Fortunatus, one of the early saintly poets born about the year 530. As the great and brave Jerome of Prague was fastened to the stake, May 30th, 1416, by the Inquisition of the Roman Catholic Church, (because he accepted the doctrines of John Wycliffe, the first translator of the Bible into English) he sang this glorious hymn, ere the flames released his spirit from its earthly house. How many millions have felt a sweet relief come to their burdened spirits, as they have sung: "Art thou weary, art thou languid, Art thou sore distressed? Come to me," saith One, "and, coming, Be at rest."

which was composed by Stephen the Sabalite, who lived about 735, one of the poets that felt the inspiration of the "Wonderful One" and turned the Gospel into song. This rich hymn remained in its original Greek letters, for the long period of about 1100 years, till Dr. John Mason Neale brought it out of its Greek hiding place, and gave it to the world in its present English dress. The year 1091, 25 years after William the Conqueror landed on Britain's shores a man child saw the light, and afterwards saw the Wonderful Christ, as it is given very few to behold Him. It was no less a poet, than the beloved Bernard of Clairvaux. From his pen, we have

several beautiful hymns, but I will simply quote the two that are reckoned among the great hymns of the church. The first is that hymn of the Passion, which is sung to that appropriate arrangement from Mendelssohn, called "Munich."

"O sacred Head now wounded With grief and shame weighed down, How scornfully surrounded, With thorns thine only crown; O sacred Head, what glory! What bliss, till now was thine! Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call thee mine."

The other one associated with Bernard, as one of the great church poets, is that hymn of heart communion with Jesus:

Jesus, the very thought of thee, With sweetness fills my breast; But sweeter far thy face to see, And in thy presence rest."

The last verse of which I must give you, for it is unique amidst the fine specimens of hymnology: "But what to those who find? Ah! this, No tongue nor pen can show; The love of Jesus, what it is, None but his loved ones know."

About thirty years after another Bernard was born, known in history as "Bernard of Cluny." We have preserved of his poems two that we count among the grand hymns of the church. These are, "Jerusalem, the golden," and "For thee, O dear, dear country," of which I will give you only the middle stanza of the latter.

"O one, O only mansion! O Paradise of joy! Where tears are ever banished, And smiles have no alloy; The Lamb is all thy splendour; The Crucified thy praise; His laud and benediction Thy ransomed people raise."

In the middle of the sixteenth century, Francis Xavier gave to the church that exquisite hymn, commencing: "My God! I love thee, not because I hope for heaven thereby; Nor yet because, if I love not, I must forever die."

Then followed a galaxy of the grandest poets the world has ever known, covering the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. From these we will select only a few productions, which have become known as the great hymns of the church, and proving Christ's pre-eminence in the realm of poetry. Dr. Watts, 1674, "Come let us join our cheerful song." Ct. Zinzendorf, 1700, "Jesus thy blood and righteousness." Chas. Wesley, 1708, "Jesus, lover of my soul." Ed. Perronet, 1726, "All hail the power of Jesus' name." Wm. Cowper, 1731, "There is a fountain filled with blood." Ag. Toplady, 1740, "Rock of ages, cleft for me." C. Elliot, 1789, "Just as I am without one plea." H. F. Lyte, 1793, "Abide with me, fast falls the evening tide." R. Palmer, 1808, "My faith looks up to thee." H. Bonar, 1808, "I heard the voice of Jesus say." Py. Crosby, 1821, "Safe in the arms of Jesus." F. R. Havergal, 1836, "Take my life, and let it be." Time falls us to refer to more than these of the great hymns of the centuries, but these have been translated into so many languages, and are sung by so many hundreds of millions of people, as to easily place the name of Jesus, above every name in the realm of poetry. And it is conceded by every thoughtful man of whatever creed, or no creed, that the greatest poetical production of any considerable length, ever written by a mortal man is John Milton's "Paradise Lost," and "Paradise Regained."

III. Music.—The mere suggestion of the musical compositions associated with the Wonderful Name brings before us a great array of talented men and women, who have consecrated their noble gifts to the extolling of "the name that is above every name." So great and varied, have been the number of musical compositions of a sacred character, that it is difficult, to decide whether of the twain, has received more attention from gifted minds, poetry or music. The volumes of sacred music which enshrine Jesus in to the highest place in the realm of sweet sounds, are so numerous and represent the best musical talent of all nations, and all ages of the world, as to throw into the shade every other subject and every other name. Around the name of Messiah, the greatest name in the Old Testament and the sequel to Jesus in the New Testament, was gathered the greatest musical talent of the first four thousand years of the history of man. And around the name of Jesus, the New Testament synonym of the Old Testament Messiah have gathered the most accomplished musical spirits of the last nearly two thousand years. So that all the musical talent of the very highest order in both dispensations have conspired to maintain as supreme in the sphere in which they lived and labored, the "Wonderful One." "Above every name."

What magnificent music was played and sung in the tabernacle and temple, under David and Solomon. The vocal and instrumental musicians composed a choir of 4,288, which these kings engaged to lead the congregation to chant forth in rich, round, rolling sounds the Messianic psalms. And this great burst of holy song, inspired by the thought of the coming Redeemer, was directed by the musical doctors, Heman, Asaph and Jeduthun. And today is there any music for grandeur and for uplifting of the soul to be compared to a great congregation like Spurgeon's, all singing one of the hymns of the Crucified Christ, or of the enthroned King! There is nothing nearer heaven, by way of musical power, than to hear seven thousand people sing Perronet's immortal hymn, "All hail the power of Jesus' name," to William Sharps' undying tune of "Miles Lane" or Oliver Holden's "Coronation."

Even before St. Ambrose inaugurated the tetraorchod chants, the name of Jesus stood first in the kingdom of

December... song. Onward the greatest mu... the Bible. Eac... a small circle... to the opera. B... its world-wide... His celebrated... composed hund... buried in the o... "The Messiah... Mendelssohn w... his musical pow... when he unite... "The name o... best musical... and church... ended, adored... IV. PAINTING... leries of the o... its own nation... will you find d... in the gallery o... gallery in the v... you will find a... Alongside Leon... ben's great ma... Raphael's im... Michel Angelo... "Christ leavin... before Pilate."... with these amo... day for true an... V. ARCHITECTURE... visited to see th... abiding structu... those which pla... Cathedrals, abb... and spires tow... reverence and... the pre-eminenc... Immortal Son o... Rev. I... BY... When in the... from his lips ha... light of a holy... gifts special an... herald of divin... been followed b... When the res... ministers nam... was at its height... his church from... nearly empty, e... no way by whic... stopped by law... there was no w... weak echoes of... provinces. If... gospel to the... not have run a... starved them an... The Academy... years and the O... men threw away... the pulpit. Wh... Parker's name... Academy. J. C... Bridgetown me... If you say go... return to the p... revival, I will... will give you b... Watch the ove... Dr. Crawley ke... cultivated his a... man to ride wit... material of whic... a word was lost... J. C. Morse and... of fervent piet... influences Dr. C... importance of r... training. Hort... useful to all of... Dr. John C. Mo... When the times... for the race. H... behind. Let us track h... through, 1846, no letter; 1846, 54; 1851, 2; 1851, 187; 2; 1858, 0 no letter; 1863, no letter; 1867, 1871, 28; 1872, 2; 1877; 38; 1878; 0; 1883, 1; 1884, 1890, 0; 1891, 1; 1896, 6; 1897, 9. been more bap... letters, of two ye... this there was mu... and other bits of