

## Pastor and People.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

GOD IS LOVE.

BY REV. JAMES CARMICHAEL, M.A., NORWOOD.

Nothing so satisfactorily attests the divine origin of the New Testament as the portrayal of the character of Him who spoke as never man spake. The character of our beloved Lord, as therein delineated, is complete in every outline and perfect in every feature. Previous to His advent, many attempts had been made by writers of great intellect and extensive knowledge to portray a perfect, complete moral being. In every instance, however, failure marked their efforts, for the reason that up to the time of our Lord's appearing, a complete, perfect moral being could not be found; and if he had he would have been misunderstood, misrepresented, and consequently should have failed to have had his character described in all its fullness and beauty. Poor fishermen, however, succeeded in leaving on record the portraiture of a complete, perfect moral being, a task which neither Homer nor Virgil, Thucydides nor Tacitus accomplished. Yet each of these writers strenuously endeavoured to do so. And in marked contrast to the character they have given of the deities and heroes mentioned in their works, the writers of the Gospels in their biography of the Son of God, have left on record the picture of a life as perfect as it is complete, as pure as it is holy, and as unselfish as it is far-reaching in its love to man. His is the picture of a complete, perfect moral character, and His biographers were qualified for the task of describing it in all its fullness and beauty, not merely because they had a complete, perfect and moral being before them, and had enjoyed His company and conversation during His public ministry; no, but because they were assisted thereto by the Holy Ghost, and because also their spiritual vision was heightened to behold His glory. But for these heaven-bestowed gifts, the writers of the Gospel would have failed to give the picture we have of the Redeemer of men. But further, John, one of His biographers, and the writer of the words, God is love, saw not only majesty and divinity in his Lord, but also love; and seeing this in Him who is the image of the Father, he was constrained by the Spirit to pen for man's encouragement and man's hope, this imperishable and soul-cheering sentence, God is love. In proportion, however, as the believer sees the glory of Christ, only will he comprehend the attribute of love, which contains in it all the other attributes of the divine nature, like as white light is the result of the blending of all the colours. "I in them and thou in Me. . . . that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me."

### THE RECIPROCAL INDWELLING.

The unapproachable grandeur of a religious life is that a man dwells in God and God in him. And there is nothing so directly and minutely practical as this. To know yourself surrounded by God, to dwell in Him as your house and fortress, must give an earnestness, a grandeur, an elevation, and a unity to life, that cannot fail to influence the smallest actions. It is a permanent, steady force, moulding the life apart from conscious thought. And to be inhabited by God, shall not this manifest its reality and thoroughness in every direction? What bounds shall we set to the possibilities here? It is a searching question at what we shall fix the merest necessity of the case! The all-important matter is to impress our minds with the fact that the most sublime and mysterious truths are the most practical. We are so apt to form a different conclusion! We obstinately adhere to the idea that these great things are far removed from plain, every-day existence. Our worldly spirit makes a wide separation between the common things and the grandeur of life. We are too blind to see that the grandeur may shine out most in the plainest things. When shall we learn the lesson that the sunshine teaches? What is so glorious and what so intensely and minutely practical as the sunshine. Think of the vast mysterious depths of the seas, and of the ships that sail over them, borne along on a shining path by this mystery! We stand in awe at the sublimity of the mountains, and yet their sublimity is their utility. They not only lift the spirit of man, they also attract the clouds and feed the rivers. It is by lying close to the dark mystery of the earth that the grass grows. The life streams from the vast heights above, and from the hidden depths beneath, alike unto the grass, the moss, the snowdrop, and the palm tree. So the mutual indwelling cannot remain apart from life. It is a striving and aggressive truth that must appear in word and deed, in life and love. There is nothing so minutely practical in religion as the mystery of religion, if only the mystery lays hold of us and enters into us. Let us not forget that it is a mutual indwelling. The one truth needs the support of the other. Am I dwelling in God? Is God my refuge and home? Let me be equally desirous that God may

find a dwelling in me. If God is my refuge, I am God's temple. Am I ever in doubt whether God is dwelling in me? Does it seem as if he could not dwell in a heart so polluted? Then let me again and afresh seek a refuge and a home in God and the sense of God's indwelling will return. And if I lose my hold on both truths, or if I want to get a better hold of them than I ever had, then let me anew realise and press to my heart the grand, radiant truth that Jesus is the Son of God. Let me ponder the meaning of that and the whole horizon will grow calm and bright. And let us remember that it is not the highest things in religion that are the most difficult. It is easier to walk humbly with God, and to dwell in God and have God dwelling in us, than to deal truly and wisely and lovingly with men. Human life is intricate and often perplexing; life with God is plain and unchanging. Life in God is rest and the preparation for life with men.—*Joseph Leckie, D.D.*

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### THE BIRTH OF EARTH AND SEA.

JOB XXXVIII. 1-11. PARAPHRASED BY WILLIAM MURRAY, HAMILTON.

Thus answered God the Lord the Patriarch Job  
Out of the whirlwind: Who is this that darkeneth  
Wise counsel with vain words devoid of knowledge?  
Gird up thy loins now like a man, and answer  
What I shall presently demand of thee:—  
Where wast thou when I by my spirit laid  
The invisible foundations of the earth?  
Declare, if thou possessest understanding,  
Whose hand hath laid the measures of it? Who  
Hath stretched the line upon it? answer thou,  
And whereupon are its foundations fastened?  
Or who did lay the corner-stone thereof,  
When sang the morning stars together, and all  
The Sons of God did shout aloud for joy?  
Or who shut up the sea with doors, what time  
It issued foaming from creation's womb?  
When I enwrapped it with the clouds, and clothed it  
With darkness dense, as with a swaddling-band;  
Break up for it the place I had decreed;  
Set bars and doors against it and declared:  
Thus far, but never further, shalt thou come,  
And here shalt thy imperious waves be stayed.

### DIVINE ADJUSTMENT.

In an eloquent missionary sermon, recently published, the Rev. J. S. Black, D.D., pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Colorado Springs, and formerly of Erskine Church, Montreal, says: We get faint-hearted and weary both in our home and in our foreign work and in lack of faith we cry out: "Where is the promise of His coming?" But the Divine assurance is that His word shall not return unto Him void. We sometimes choose the wrong instruments to accomplish our ends, but the Gospel is a God-given means. The secret of power is adaptation. In the moral and in the spiritual, as in the physical universe, things are fitly joined together by the Great Artificer.

An English lark springs from his bed on the dewy grass and pours forth his matin song to the rising sun. He has taken to himself his wings of the morning, and up and up he mounts until distance hides him from the keenest unaided vision. He is half a mile up, but the clear notes of his melody come down to earth. But sound travels equally and in all directions, and so it follows that a cubic mile of air is trembling and vibrating with that melody.

A cubic foot of air weighs four hundred grains, or five-sixths of an ounce, and a mile of air, or more properly speaking, a sphere of air of one mile in diameter weighs two million tons. Do you realize what two million tons means? It means a coal train stretching across this continent; it means a freight for six hundred of our large ocean steamships. Every school boy knows that every particle of that air space filled with the song of the lark is tremulous with vibration. The vocal cords in the lark's throat which put these two million tons of air in motion are less than a third of an inch in length. The secret of power is adaptation. God adjusted those vocal cords to the air on which the singer floats. The same God has declared that his word is powerful. This is our inspiration and our hope. The earth is full of these divine adjustments. I knew a man who was the fettered slave of intemperance. His failing health pleaded with him, but in vain. Business prospects going to wreck did not restrain him. His minister and his relatives tried and failed. The wife whom he had sworn to protect, honour, and defend, but who was now in danger of becoming houseless and homeless, pleaded in vain. He was going down to the drunkard's grave. One day he took his little girl only three years old upon his knee and God used her innocent prattle to send that sinner to his knees in agony of penitence and prayer. He was healed just because God Almighty adapted the infant's voice to the drunkard's conscience as truly as he adapted the vocal cords of the skylark's throat to the circumambient air. The missionary goes forth bearing precious seed, for God can make the hearts of men as fertile fields in which the seed shall flourish.

### EFFECTIVE FAMILY RELIGION.

Family religion requires the highest mutual confidence. The reading of the Bible, prayer in the morning or evening, attendance at church, cannot constitute family religion. The spirit of the parents must be devout; the children must know that both father and mother depend upon God for direction, and look to Him for comfort. The accidental discovery of a parent at prayer makes a deeper impression upon a child's mind than a month of routine services. The spirit in which religious subjects are referred to is more than the things that are said. The undertone is more important than the overtone. Not gloom, nor tasks, nor morbid conscientiousness, but simple, unaffected confidence in God and truth, a personal trust in Christ, and a love for each other, which is the result of the love of all for Christ, and a sincere spirit of good-will to all at home, and of kindness in thought and expression to all who enter the home or are mentioned there, these make the family religion, and make its Bible-reading, prayer, and church-going as natural as its social life. No child ever goes out from such a family to become an unbeliever or a scoffer. But from the pharisaic, the stiff, the dead, the intolerant, whose religion is a yoke of forms without heart, few of the youth become religious.

### THE SOUL REJOICING IN GOD.

Religious satisfaction and joy in God is one of the few things—almost the one only thing—that having possessed we can really keep. As the years pass, we part first with one friend—then with another. Life becomes more and more solitary and desolate. There are many acquaintances, but if we live on these are fewer and fewer friends. The store in Paradise, we trust grows, but earth becomes more and more a desert for the heart. The heart cannot place all its resources at the disposal of every new claimant. The heart, as the years go on, withdraws more and more into itself, and at the grave it must part with all that is earthly that is yet left. "He shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth; neither shall his pomp follow him," said the Psalmist of the wealthy three thousand years ago. All is left at the gate of death, except, except—that knowledge and love of the everlasting Being who binds us to Himself and which is our true outfit for eternity. It is something in a world of shadows to come into contact with the real; it is something when all is passing away from us to lay firm hold on the eternal, on the indestructible.—*Canon Liddon.*

### THE WORK OF A MOMENT.

Did you never write a letter and just as you were finishing it let your pen fall on it, or a drop of ink blot the fair page? It was the work of a moment, but the evil could not be entirely effaced. Did you never cut yourself unexpectedly and quickly? It took days or weeks to heal the wound, and even then a scar remained. It is related of Lord Brougham, that one day he occupied a conspicuous place in a group to have his daguerreotype taken. But at an unfortunate moment he moved. The picture was taken, but his face was blurred.

Do you ask what application we would make of these facts? Just this: It takes a lifetime to build a character; it only takes one moment to destroy it. "Watch and pray," therefore, "that ye enter not into temptation." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

### CAN YOU AFFORD IT?

Can you afford to stay away from meeting on the Sabbath, where you may worship the Lord, hear the Gospel preached, encourage the minister and people, and grow wiser and better by the instruction given? Can you afford to stay away from the prayer-meeting, where you may meet the brethren, sing the songs of Zion, pray for one another, for the descent of the Holy Spirit and for the salvation of sinners?—where you can tell of the love of Christ and His blood that cleanseth from all sin, which often convinces sinners of the necessity of pardon and a life of prayer?

### GOOD DEEDS.

Live for something. Do good, and leave behind you a monument of virtue that the storms of life can never destroy. Write your name by kindness, love and mercy on the hearts of the thousands you come in contact with year by year, and you will never be forgotten. No, your name, your deeds, will be as legible on the hearts you leave behind as the stars on the brow of evening. Good deeds will shine as bright on the earth as the stars of Heaven.—*Dr. Chalmers.*

The surest method of arriving at a knowledge of God's eternal purposes about us is to be found in the right use of the present moment. Each hour comes with some little fagot of God's will fastened upon its back.—*F. W. Faber.*