

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### GOD'S UNFOLDINGS.

Sitting to-day in Christ's school (for that is an essential idea of His Church), let me say a few words to my fellow-scholars. The meek and the teachable will He guide in His way. There is room for us all in that spot where Mary sat—at the feet of Jesus. And the encouragement to us is, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." This does not mean everything, even though our hearts may ache to find out many mysteries. The "secret things belong unto God." Over certain doors the inscription is affixed. "No admittance here." In heaven we may know these things even as we are known, but now they are wisely hidden from our eyes.

Yet our all-wise and loving God is constantly unfolding Himself to His earthly children. All scientific discovery is the passage from the unknown into the known; every truth discovered is a fresh unfolding of the Creator. Very slowly, very gradually is this progress effected. Centuries passed away before Galileo found out the rotation of the earth, and Newton the law of gravitation. Other generations must roll by before man learned enough about God's laws of electro-magnetism to fashion the ocean telegraph. Yet these laws were all in existence in the days of Noah and Abraham, only they had not yet been unfolded. I once spent a night on Mount Righi, and there was nothing visible for a rod from my window. But when the morning broke the icy crowns of the Jungfrau and the Schreckhorn began to glitter in the early beams. They had been there all the night, waiting for the unfoldings of the dawn. Even so have all God's laws of the material universe and all His purposes of redeeming mercy through Jesus Christ been in existence from the beginning. They only waited for the dayspring of discovery. And one of the most delightful occupations of a devout mind is to watch the unfoldings of God, and to drink in new truths as He gradually reveals them.

The more closely I study my Bible, the more I detect a steady progress of divine doctrine, from the first line of Genesis to the closing grandeur of the Apocalypse. That little altar of turf on which Abel lays his lamb points onward to Calvary. The whole Jewish dispensation goes on step by step until the Messiah comes. Then I find four sections of the Book which photograph the life of Jesus to me, each one presenting some particular view of my Saviour's face and footsteps, and miracles and teachings. Calvary and the resurrection only prepare the way for the descent of the Holy Spirit. Then comes the visible manifestation of the Gospel, in the conversion and organization of the Primitive Church. Peter's tongue, and Paul's brain, and John's heart, and Dorcas's needle all get into motion. These new converts require spiritual instruction, and the whole series of inspired epistles are produced. The man or the minister who asserts that the writings of the four evangelists are "Bible enough for him," and that the epistles of Paul are only excellent surplusage, but worthy of small attention, simply writes himself down an ignoramus. There is as veritable an unfolding of heavenly truth in the eighth chapter to the Romans as in the Sermon on the Mount. And when the laws of our spiritual life have been unfolded in the inspired epistles of Paul, John, Peter, and James, then the magnificent panorama of the Apocalypse is unrolled, and we get a glimpse of Christ's final triumphs and the glory of his Celestial Kingdom. After John lays down his pen, History takes up hers, and carries us on through the martyrdoms of saints, and the councils, and the conflicts, and the Reformation period, and the inauguration of modern missions to the nations who sit in darkness. At the foot of every page she writes: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."

In no direction do we behold more wonderful unfoldings of God than in what we call his Providence. This is a department of God's school in which we are learning fresh lessons every day. In Providence, divine wisdom is married to divine love. All things work together for good to them who love God and trust Him. The sceptic jeers at this; but the trusting Christian *knows* it from actual experience. It is often a dear-bought experience, for some of God's truths are knocked into us by hard blows, and some lessons are

spelled out through eyes cleansed with tears. Our perverse mistake is that we demand that God shall explain himself at every step, instead of waiting for Him to unfold His intricate purposes at His own time and in His own way. Why A—is set up and good brother B—who seems equally deserving—is cast down; why the only little crib in one Christian home is emptied by death, and the nursery in another home is full of happy voices; why one good enterprise prospers, and another one is wrecked—all such perplexing puzzles shake terribly the faith that is not well-grounded on the Rock.

To all these pitiable outcries the calm answer of our Heavenly Father is: "Be still, and know that I am God." "I lead the blind by a way that they know not." What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." These are the voices of love which come to us from behind the cloud. If we wait patiently the cloud will break away or part asunder, and our eyes will behold the rainbow of mercy overarching the throne. Twenty years ago I ascended Mount Washington by the old bridle-path, on a day of thick fog and storm. Over the slippery boulders we picked our toilsome way, unable to see anything but our sure-footed horse and our guide. A sulky company were we when we reached the "Tip-top House." But presently a strong wind swept away the banks of mist, and revealed the magnificent landscape from the mountain's base to the great wide sea. As the wonderful vision unfolded itself to our delighted eyes, we could mark the pathway by which we had been led up to that mount of discovery. Tenfold more delightful was the outlook because we had gained it by such hard toil and it had been so long hidden from our sight.

That day's experience was a sermon to my soul. It taught me afresh just how a believer must leave God to order his footsteps, and how he must wait for God to unfold the hidden purposes of his love. Faith's stairways are steep and slippery. They can only be climbed by a sure foot and a steady hold on the Unseen Hand. In the hard clamber, we are often thrown down on our knees. Cry as loudly as we may in the driving mist for "more light," we do not receive any other answer than this: "Fear not! Only trust!" If we unloose our hold on God's hand for an instant, we go over the precipice. But the more tightly we cling, the steadier we walk; the more willing we are to be humbled, the more certain are we to get upward; the more crosses we bear for Christ, the lighter will be our hearts; and by and by we shall reach that gate of pearl the opening of which will unfold to us the everlasting flood of glory. These are among the thoughts which have come into my mind as I have sat to-day in Christ's school, while some of the scholars around me have been singing; but alas! some others are sobbing and weeping.—*Theodore T. Cuyler, D.D.*

### "OLD HUNDRED."

If it be true that Luther composed "Old Hundred," and if the worship of immortals is carried on the wings of angels to heaven, how often has he heard the declaration: "They are singing 'Old Hundred' now." The solemn strain carries us back to the time of the reformers, Luther and his devoted band. He, doubtless, was the first to strike the grand old chords in the public sanctuary in his own Germany. From his own stentorian lungs they rolled, vibrating not through vaulted cathedral roof, but along a grander arch—the eternal heavens. Neither men nor angels will let it pass into oblivion. Can you find a tomb in the land where sealed lips lie that have not sung that tune? If they were gray old men they had heard or sung "Old Hundred." If they were babes they smiled as their mothers rocked them to sleep singing "Old Hundred." Sinner and saint have joined with the endless congregation where it has, with and without the pealing organ, sounded on sacred air. The dear little children, looking on this strange world with wondering eyes, have lisped it.

The sweet young girl whose tombstone told of sixteen summers, she whose pure and innocent face haunted you with its mild beauty, loved "Old Hundred," and as she closed her eyes, seemed communing with angels who were so soon to claim her. He whose manhood was devoted to the service of his God, and who, with faltering step, ascended the pulpit stairs with one white hand placed over his labouring breast, loved "Old Hundred." And, though some-

times his lips only moved, away down in his heart, so soon to cease its throbs, the holy melody was sounding. The dear, white-headed father, with his tremulous voice, how he loved "Old Hundred"—his arms crossed over the top of his cane, his silvery locks floating off from his hollow temples, and a tear, perchance, stealing down his furrowed cheeks as the noble strains ring—hallowed by fourscore years in the Master's care, "Old Hundred" sounds indeed to him a sacred melody.

You may fill your churches with choirs, with Sabbath prima donnas whose daring notes emulate the steeple, and cease almost as much; but give us the spirit-stirring tones of the Lutheran hymn, sung by young and old together! Martyrs have hallowed it; it has gone up from the dying beds of saints; the old churches where generation after generation has worshipped, and where many scores of the dear dead have been carried and laid before the altar, seem to breathe of "Old Hundred" from vestibule to tower-top; the very air is haunted with the spirit. Thus, for a moment, of the assembled company who have at different times and in different places joined in the familiar tune—throng upon throng—the stern, the timid, the gentle, the brave, the beautiful—their rapt faces beaming with the inspiration of the heavenly sounds!

"Old Hundred;" king of the sacred bond of ancient airs! Never shall our ears grow weary of hearing, or our tongues of singing thee! And when we get to heaven, who knows but what the first triumphal strain that welcomes us may be—

"Be thou, O God, exalted high!"

—*George H. Munroe, in Musical Record.*

### A CURE FOR SLANDER.

The following very homely but singularly instructive lesson is by St. Philip Neri:

A lady presented herself to him one day, accusing herself of being given to slander. "Do you frequently fall into this fault?" inquired the Saint. "Yes, father, very often," replied the penitent. "My dear child," said the Saint, "your fault is great, but the mercy of God is still greater; for your penance do as follows: Go to the nearest market, purchase a chicken just killed and still covered with feathers; you will then walk a certain distance, plucking the bird as you go along; your walk finished, you will return to me."

Great was the astonishment of the lady in receiving so strange a penance; but silencing all human reasoning, she replied, "I will obey you, father, I will obey." Accordingly she repaired to the market, bought the fowl and set out on her journey, plucking it as she went along, as she had been ordered.

In a short time she returned anxious to tell of her exactness in accomplishing her penance, and desirous to receive some explanation of one so singular.

"Ah!" said the Saint, "you have been very faithful to the first part of my orders; now do the second part, and you will be cured. Retrace your steps; pass through all the places you have already traversed, and gather up one by one all the feathers you have scattered."

"But, father," exclaimed the poor woman, "that is impossible. I cast the feathers carelessly on every side; the wind carried them in different directions; how can I recover them?"

"Well, my child," replied the Saint, "so it is with your words of slander, like the feathers which the wind has scattered, they have been wasted in many directions; call them back if you can. Go and sin no more."

History does not tell if the lady was converted; but it is probable. It required a Saint to give the lesson; one should be a fool not to profit by it.

JOSEPH COOK writes from San Francisco expressing much satisfaction that he has been able to hear their Christian songs in good English from the lips of Chinese and Japanese converts. At a mission school he saw three Chinamen baptized, and sixty men and twenty women of the same nationality were present to witness the ceremony. Mr. Cook took part in the ceremonies at the meeting by an address of twenty or thirty minutes, and was "deeply impressed" by what he saw. "California," he says, "is one of the gates of Asia, and in the San Francisco Chinese school Christianity stands before gates ajar."