

The Pastor and People.

The Message of the Church to Men of Wealth.

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[CONCLUDED.]

II. The message of the Church to the man of wealth.

The message of the Church contains those principles of life which, carried out, would, and hereafter will, realize the Divine order of society. The revealed Message does not create the facts of our humanity—it simply makes them known. The Gospel did not make God our Father; it authoritatively reveals that He is so. It did not create a new duty of loving one another; it revealed the old duty which existed from eternity, and must exist as long as humanity is humanity. It was no "new commandment," but an old commandment which had been heard from the beginning.

The Church of God is that living body of men who are called by Him out of the world, not to be the inventors of a new social system, but to exhibit in the world by word and life, chiefly by life, what is, was, and will be in the idea of God. Now, so far as the social economy is concerned, the revelation of the Church will coincide with the discoveries of a scientific political economy. Political economy discovers slowly the facts of immutable laws, of social well-being. But the living principles of those laws, which cause them to be obeyed, Christianity has revealed to loving hearts long before. The Spirit discovers them to the spirit. For instance, Political economy, gazing on such a fact, as this of civil war would arrive at the same principle which the Church arrives at. She, too, would say, Not of selfishness, but love. Only that she arrives at these principles by experience, not intention—by terrible lessons, not revelation—by revolutions, wars, and famines, not by spiritual impulses of charity. And so because these principles were eternally true in humanity. We find in the conduct of Abigail towards David in this early age. Not explicitly, but implicitly, the very principles which the Church of Christ has given to the world: and more—the very principles which a sound political economy would sanction. In her reply to David we have the anticipation by a loving heart of those duties which selfish prudence must have taught at last.

1. The spiritual dignity of man as man. Recollect David was the poor man, but Abigail, the high born lady, admits his worth: "The Lord will certainly make my Lord a sure house, because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days." Here is a truth revealed to that age. Nabal's day and the day of such as Nabal is past; another power is rising above the horizon. David's cause is God's cause. Worth does not mean what a man is worth—you must find some better definition than that. Now this is the very truth revealed in the Incarnation. David, Israel's model King, the King by the grace of God, not by the conventional rules of human choice—is a Shepherd's son. Christ, the King who is to reign over our regenerated humanity is humbly born—the poor woman's Son. That is the Church's message to the man of wealth, and a message which it seems has to be learned afresh in every age. It was new to Nabal. It was new to the men of the age of Christ. In His day they were offended in Him because He was humbly born. "Is not this the Carpenter's Son?" It is the offence now. They who retain those superstitious ideas of the eternal superiority of rank and wealth have the first principles of the Gospel yet to learn. How can they believe in the Son of Mary? They may honour Him with the lip, they deny Him in His brethren. Whoever helps to keep alive that ancient lie of upper and lower, resting the distinction not on official authority, or personal worth, but on wealth and title, is doing his part to hinder the establishment of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

Now the Church of Christ proclaims that truth in Baptism. She speaks of a kingdom here, in which all are, as spirits, equal. She reveals a fact. She does not affect to create the fact. She says—not hypothetically—"This child may be the child of God if grace has taken place, or if hereafter he shall have certain feelings and experiences;" nor "I hereby I create this child magically, by supernatural power, in one moment what it was not a moment before;" but she says authoritatively, "I pronounce this child the child of God: the brother of Christ the First Born—the Son of Him who has taught us by his Son to call Him our Father, not my Father. Whatever that child may become hereafter, in fact, he is now by creation and redemption—the child of God. Rich or poor, titled or untitled, he shares the spiritual nature of the second Adam—the Lord of Heaven.

2. The second truth expressed by Abigail was the law of sacrifice. She did not heal the grievance with smooth words. Starving men are not to be pacified by professions of good will.

She brought her two hundred loaves, and her two skins of wine, her five sheep ready dressed, &c. A princely provision. You might have said this was waste—half would have been enough; but the truth is, liberality is a most real economy. She could not stand there calculating the smallest possible expense, at which the affront might be wiped out. True economy is to pay liberally and fairly for faithful service. The largest charity is the best economy. Nabal had had a faithful servant. He should have counted no expense too great to retain his services, instead of cheapening and depreciating them. But we wrong Abigail if we call this economy or calculation. In fact, had it been done on economical principles, it would have failed. Ten times this sum from Nabal would not have arrested revenge. For Nabal it was too late. Concessions extracted by fear only provoke exaction further. The poor know well what is given because it must be given, and what is conceded from a sense of justice. They feel only what is real. David's men and David felt that these were not the gifts of a

scald calculation, but the offerings of a generous heart. And it was their gratitude—their enthusiasm—their unfeigned homage.

This is the attractive power of that great law whose highest expression was the Cross. "If I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Say what you will, it is not interest, but the sight of noble qualities and true sacrifice which commands the devotion of the world. Yes, even the bandit and the outcast will bend before that as before a Divine thing. In one form or another, it draws all men, it commands all men.

Brother men, the early Church gave expression to that principle of sacrifice in a very touching way. They had all things in common. "Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own." They failed, not because they declared that, but because men began to think that the duty of sharing was compulsory. They proclaimed principles which were unnatural, inasmuch as they set aside all personal feelings which are part of our nature too. They virtually compelled private property to cease, because he who retained private property when all were giving up, was degraded, and hence became a hypocrite and a liar, like Ananias.

But let us not love the truth which they expressed in an exaggerated way: "Neither said any of them, that ought of the things which he possessed was his own." Property is sacred. It is private property; if it were not, it could not be sacrificed. If it were to be shared equally by the idle and the industrious, there could be no giving. Property is the rich man's own. Nabal is right in saying, my bread, my water, my flesh, but there is a higher right which says, it is not yours. And that will speak to every rich man in one way or another, according as he is selfish or unselfish, coming as a voice of terror or a voice of blessing. It came to Nabal with a double curse, turning his heart into stone with the vision of the danger and the armed ranks of David's avengers, and laying on David's soul the sin of intended murder. It came to the heart of Abigail with a double blessing: blessing her who gave and him who took.

To the spirit of the Cross alone we look as the remedy for social evils. When the people of this great country, especially the rich, shall have been touched with the spirit of the Cross to a largeness of sacrifice which they have not dreamed as yet, there will be an atonement between the Rights of Labor and the Rights of Property.

3. The last part of the Church's message to the man of wealth touches the matter of rightful influence.

Very remarkable is the demeanor of David towards Nabal as contrasted with his demeanor towards Abigail. In the one case, defiance, and a haughty self-assertion of equality: in the other, deference, respect, and the most eloquent benediction. It was not, therefore, against the wealthy class, but against individuals of the class that the wrath of these men burned.

See, there, the folly and falsehood of the sentimental regret that there is no longer any reverence felt towards superiors. There is reverence to superiors if only it can be shown that they are superiors. Reverence is deeply rooted in the heart of humanity—you cannot tear it out. Civilization—secure—progress—only change its direction: they do not weaken its force. If it no longer bows before crucifixes and candles, priests and relics, it is not extinguished towards what is truly sacred and what is priestly in man. The fiercest result against false authority, is only a step towards submission to what is rightful emancipation from false leads only sets the heart free to honour true ones. The free-born David will not do homage to Nabal. Well, now go and mourn over the degenerate age which no longer feels respect for that which is above it. But behold—David has found a something nobler than himself. Genuine charity—sacrifice and justice—and in gratitude and profoundest respect he bares to that. The state of society which is coming is not one of protection and dependence, nor one of mysterious authority, and blind obedience to it, nor one in which any class shall be privileged by Divine right, and another remain in perpetual tutelage, but it is one in which unselfish services and personal qualities will command by Divine right, gratitude and admiration, and secure a true and spiritual leadership.

Oh, let not the rich misread the signs of the times, or mistake their brethren: they have less and less respect for titles and riches, for vestments and ecclesiastical pretensions, but they have a real respect for superior knowledge and superior goodness; they listen like children to those whom they believe to know a subject better than themselves. Let those who know it say whether there is not something inexpressibly touching and even humbling in the large, hearty, manly English reverence and love which the working men show towards those who love and serve them truly, and save them from themselves and from doing wrong. See how David's feelings gush forth. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

The rich and the great may have that love if they will.

To conclude. Doubtless David was wrong; he had no right even to redress wrongs thus; patience was his divinely appointed duty; and doubtless in such circumstances we should be very ready to preach submission and blame David. Alas! the clergy of the Church of England have been only too ready to do this; for three long centuries we have taught submission to the powers that be, as if that were the only text in Scripture bearing on the relations between the ruler and the ruled. Rarely have we dared to demand of the powers that be, justice; of the wealthy man and the titled—duties. We have produced folios of slavish flattery upon the Divine Right of Power. Shame on us! We have not denounced the wrongs done to weak ones; and yet for one text in the Bible which requires submission and patience from the poor, you will find a hundred which denounce the vices of the rich—in

the writings of the noble old Jewish prophets, that and almost that only—that in the Old Testament, with a deep roll of words that sounded like small thunders; and that in the New Testament in words less impassioned, and more calmly terrible from the apostles and their Master; and woe to us in the Great Day of God, if we have been the sycophants of the rich, instead of the redresser of the poor man's wrongs—woe to us if we have been tutoring David into respect to his superior, Nabal, and have forgotten that David's cause, not Nabal's, is the cause of God.

Beecher's Second Lecture.

THE BIBLE OF THE CLOSET, THE CLASS-ROOM AND THE PULPIT.

I come to-day to consider the best methods of getting at the Bible as a repository of truth. The book is so multifarious, it contains so much, it is to every man what he makes of it. I see innumerable streams of theological doctrine and personal belief setting from the word of God, and each of these becomes to the individual his received Bible. Hence this same word of God becomes among men many Bibles. This afternoon I speak of three; the Bible of the closet, the Bible of the class-room, and the Bible of the pulpit; or a Bible of special aid and companionship to the individual, the Bible as studied and explained systematically, and a Bible as applied to the growth of men taken collectively. These are not really separate or necessarily antagonistic. They run into each other, and a perfect use of the book combines them all.

The Bible of the closet must be a personal one. It undertakes to give to the individual making application to it the light, direction, inspiration, and consolation he needs. It is the word of God as studied for personal benefit, without expecting to learn from it the system of the universe or to find therein the philosophies. It is the private man's Bible. There is a consecrative or systematic reading of the Bible that ministers not infrequently to superstition or fanaticism. The true way is to so companion with the Bible as to get out of it what we need. Let it be to you as your Father's house. Enter it freely, for you are welcome, and when there speak or keep silent as you prefer.

No man can appropriate the whole Bible. Many read it all, or rather skate over it once a year, who find in the end that a small portion of it is theirs. Take a robust, practically, talkative Yankee, well acquainted with making money, and put him into Solomon's Song. What will he make of it? Yet many, whose minds are of the Oriental, dreamy cast, will tell you it is the buckle of the whole book. The Bible has its deep things for mystics, hidden things for speculators, things of midnight and twilight, things of day-dawn and noon-tide. You can make the Ten Commandments cover about all the world, just as you can beat out a piece of gold as big as my hand and make it cover an acre; but compared with the law of love in the New Testament, they are merely negative prohibitions designed for the infancy of mankind. They have no trace of the fruit of the Spirit or ray of redemption. The Sermon on the Mount was higher by an immense reach, and to me the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth chapters of St. John's gospel are as much higher than the Sermon as that is above the commandments.

Some have a closet Bible only in form. The business man betinks himself, on his way down town, that he has forgotten his prayers. He hastens back, and hurriedly reads one of those short Psalms. Blessed are the short Psalms for lazy people! He endeavours to take with him a little of the Bible, as the superstitious devotee puts on an amulet, and for about the same purpose. You might as well look into a cockshoop window and think you had eaten as to read your Bible in that way. Thousands of humble people—the mother of the household, the perplexed mechanic, the man heavily burdened—have learned the true use of the Bible of the closet. When I am strong, I go through the woods with a buoyant, tireless step; but when I am weak, I stop to cut a staff. It is when one is spiritually weak he goes to his Bible for a staff of consolation. Could you hear the heart-utterance of many in your congregation when you are preaching you would hear them say, "I hope he will shape that sermon for me, that I may get strength to bear my heavy burden." The form of the sermon is unheeded if it only feeds. In no way can the minister feed the hungry sheep that look up to him as their shepherd, but by a life-giving, experimental acquaintance with the Bible of the closet.

The Bible of the class-room is a Bible of philosophies, and is interpreted according to some accepted system of divinity. This form of the study of the Word is necessary because philosophy is the highest style of thought in religion as well as in other fields, and because the Bible, from the very nature of its make-up, demanded such treatment. In making this book, first came the philologist and archaeologist, then the theologian and philosopher of Scripture. All these are necessary to the study of these same Scriptures because they are so varied and composite—touching man on so many sides. You know that I have often seemed to you to underrate theologians, but you know I didn't mean it. I profess to be one myself; my father was one, and so are my brothers; yet I think it fair to make game of them. They are fair food for innocent and univicious fun, to relieve the monotony of a lecture or furnish a little amusing criticism. I believe in the theologians, not in all they say, but in their method of dealing with truth. Every man who works systematically in religion is a theologian. Theology is the philosophy of moral ideas. Systems of theology are things of growth. Sometimes the bark of a tree does not grow enough for the summer, and the trunks burst through it. So old institutions and systems become no longer fitted to the age, and need to be recast. Our theology must change with our views of the divine economy. Theologians err when they approach the Bible with the belief that it in letter contains all that it is necessary to learn of the divine nature and administration.

It is not meant as a substitute for the personal revelation of the Holy Ghost. There is nothing there to teach me as God's spirit did when I was standing by the side of my dead first-born. Afterwards I went back and found the germ there. Man must work out his knowledge of the Bible as he works out his own salvation. The Bible is not, to any one, complete without a mass of human experience, which is a part of Providence's scheme of unity.

For John Calvin I have a profound admiration, especially as he took the Church when it was stripped of everything attractive, and gave it an intellectual cast which surpassed rites, music, and cathedrals. But Calvin was a man without bowels, living in an iron age, when church life flowed through forms as fixed as the supposed decrees of fate. His system was tinged with the absolutism of his age. His system has done both good and evil. It has crushed many hearts and tuned many days to darkness. By it much of God's pleasant light has been intercepted and thrown on men in a lurid red or hideous blue. His was a system of a master mind, but it was not a Christian system. It was the religion of nature before nature knew of a Saviour. Yet the world is much indebted for such a system erected in the twilight of Christianity.

The Bible of the pulpit applied to the teaching of masses of men must be the outgrowth of the two former methods of interpretations. Experienced in the closet method, learned in the class-room, it must be applied to men according to their needs. It is well to learn theologies in the schools, but your future field of labour will make prominent features of truth hardly touched upon in the class-room, and much of systems you will have learned, you will be ready to lay aside. The three volumes written by Dr. Hodge are a monument of industry and erudition. Read them through; they will toughen you! You will see a great deal you will believe, and a great deal you won't, I hope. Many little doctrines are held, not for their own importance, but as necessary links in a system. When you come to preach you will not preach systems, but individual truths. Many preach these for "the truth! the truth," say they, but I always supposed men preached for the souls of men. If you question these ministers, they will trot out their texts, call the roll, and show link after link, and show what is Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism, demi-semi-Pelagianism, etc. But I hear Paul say: "I determined not to know anything among you but, not the Old Testament, not Christ only, but Christ and him crucified." In the Seminary you ought to know all doctrines, but you will sit them when you come to preach. You will preach to the people your personal Bible.

No man is fit to be a preacher whose garments do not smell of the vineyard of the Lord. Spurzheim has said no woman is fit to marry who has not experienced affliction. He must have cried, "Would God that I had died for thee." Then shall he be happy only to be carried in the divine arms. Then with the Bible of the closet and the class-room you will have the preacher's Bible. You will take the truths gained by bitter experience and bring them home to men for their salvation. Standing only as the trumpet, with the lips of God behind you.

Mr. Moody's Power.

Our readers are aware of Mr. Moody's signal success as an evangelist in Scotland. The Edinburgh Daily Review, a secular paper, thus indicates its view of the elements of his power. Are they not the elements of all pulpit power? Are not some of them lacking in many otherwise good ministers of Christ?

He is not a man of much education or culture; his manner is abrupt and blunt; his speech bristles with Americanisms; his voice is sharp, and colloquial; and he never attempts anything like finished or elaborate composition. But he is in downright earnest. He believes what he says; and says it as if he believed it. He gets wonderfully near to his hearers, without any apparent effort. Whatever size the audience may be, he is at home with them at once, and he makes them feel that they are at home with him. He is gifted with a rare sagacity, an insight into the human heart, a knowledge of what is stirring in it and of what is fitted to impress it. He has in his possession a large number of incidents and experiences well fitted to throw light on the points he employs them to elucidate, and to clutch the appeals which he uses them to enforce. In addition to all this, he has a deeply pathetic vein, which enables him to plead very earnestly at the citadel of the heart. At first his tone may seem to be hard. He will take for his text "There is no difference," and press the doctrine of universal condemnation as if the worst and the best were precisely alike. Possibly the antagonism of his audience is somewhat aroused. But by and by he will take them with him to some affecting death-bed, and his tone will show how profoundly his own heart is stirred by what is happening there. The vein of pathos comes out tenderly and beautifully. He seems as if he was lying on the ground pleading in tears with his hearers to come to Christ. But, most important of all, he seems to rely for effect absolutely on Divine power. Of course every true preacher does, but in very different degrees of conscious trust and expectation. Mr. Moody goes to his meetings fully expecting the divine presence because he has asked it. He speaks with the fearlessness, the boldness and the directness of one delivering a message from the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And he takes pains to have his own heart in the spirit of the message. He tries to go to his audience loving them, and actively and fervently longing for their salvation. He says that if he does not try to stir up this spirit of love beforehand he cannot get hold of an audience; if he does, he never fears. He endeavors to address them with a soul steeped in the corresponding emotion. He seems to try, like Baxter, never to speak of "weighty soul concerns" without his whole spirit being drowned therein.

An Unspoken Sermon by Dr. Candlish.

We give the following extract from a sermon written by Dr. Candlish last autumn at Whitley, but never preached. On his death-bed he gave directions that it should be placed at the disposal of the editor of the Sunday Magazine. As one of the latest products of the head and heart of the lamented author, it will be read with peculiar interest.

The three negative propositions in the first verse (of the 1st Psalm), describing the godly man in the view of what he is not, or does not do, are commonly understood as forming a sort of climax, or ascending gradation, in the scale of wickedness, rising or sinking from bad to worse; the first indicating some slight deviation from the right path under the incidental influence of evil counsel; the second, a disposition to linger or linger in the dangerous and deceitful path thus opened; and the third, a deliberate and settled purpose to make the thorough of iniquity one's chosen seat. It may be presumptuous to question this apparently unanimous interpretation; and yet I am inclined to think it questionable. The very strong word used in the third proposition, "scornful," or "scornor" (or, in Jeremiah xv. 17, "mockor"), may have been misleading. It is stronger, I apprehend, in our translation than the original Hebrew requires. Perhaps "sceptic" is nearer the mark. To sit long and habitually alongside of profane scoffers and ribald mockers, choosing as your own the same seat with them, denotes an almost desperate extreme of godless depravity. But to sit down among sceptics, to find oneself in a company of decent men, perhaps, and professing Christians, discussing with somewhat of undue freedom, bordering on irreverence, difficult points of belief, and starting unseasonably and unsuitably questions more easily raised than answered, is a very different affair. The conversation may seem very harmless, if not even profitable, and yet it may be the beginning of evil. You rise to go, but you hesitate and stand to hear a little more of the argument or wit. You are beckoned and look back, you hang on in the way, growing more familiar with it, if not enamoured of it. A few days or months, or a year, of such dallying with what touches the faith in principle—and your practical conduct is affected. Your walk becomes the walk of the ungodly; you live as the wicked live. You will see that I take the words "walk, stand, sit" as my stepping-stones, rather than the words "ungodly, sinner, scornful," and I cannot but think that the usage of Scripture, or of the Psalms elsewhere, warrants my doing so. In this view the taking of a seat to rest comes short, in point of committal or consummation, of standing and lingering to listen; as that again by no means brings out a fixed habit of life—a characteristic and customary course of behaviour, which is the true and invariable meaning of term "walk." Attaching, therefore, in the meantime, comparatively little importance to minute shades of difference in the words descriptive of those with whom you may be tempted to associate, I mark the different kinds or degrees of the association that is deprecated. The first mentioned I take to be the worst. The rest of your life is substantially or mainly "the counsel of the ungodly." According to that you now practically frame and fashion a mode of behaviour. To its spirit you conform all but univocally, in your way of thinking, speaking, acting. How is it that this habit of conformity to the world has grown upon you, and grown so strong and prevalent? Insidiously, you may be sure, and almost insensibly, for you were not always thus minded. You were trained in a better school, under the influence of higher and holier principles. But somehow, while not forsaking quite the narrow way, you come in contact with some of those who always found idly or mischievously lounging about the gate of entrance into the broad way. You hear their conversation, their careless talk, their insidial or semi-insidial speech. It does not vex you as perhaps once it did. You stand to listen, and are not shocked.

How is it so? How has this come to be possible? Once you could say, "I have not sat with vain persons," "I will not sit with the wicked" (Ps. cxvi. 4-5). But you have been invited, in the incidental course of social intercourse, by mutual acquaintances of theirs and yours, to meet them at table in some safe, domestic, friendly circle. You find their discourse interesting, entertaining; instructive even, sometimes edifying. There may indeed be insinuations now and then thrown out regarding religion and religious books or people such as you do not quite like; and occasionally there may curl on the lip, or glance in the eye, something like a covert sneer or sarcasm. But they are on your guard, and probably ere long you are not. There is a fascination in their manner that charms you, and their views strike you for their fresh originality and plausibility, even though they touch occasionally on some antiquated opinions about the Word and the ways of God. Is it not time to "call a halt?"—to rise and be of to mediation in the law of your own experience of delight in his law your real and only security? From the brink of the sliding-scale of acquiescence in human speculations and temptations pass at once back again into the region of divine fellowship and divine contemplation. There, not negatively in resisting the beginning of evil, but positively, in the study and practice of what is good, you find your shield and shelter from the darts of the adversary. And there you find your blessedness.

An instrument for observing the altitude of the sun has recently been found under a stone near the harbor of Valentia, Ireland, supposed to have belonged to one of the two ships of the Spanish Armada wrecked near there. When discovered it was enclosed in a case, which on being touched fell to pieces. The gradulations were very carefully and accurately made. The instrument was of a most primitive kind, being intended to be suspended from the observer's thumb while he made the observation, and no such instrument has been used for the last 150 years or more.