

What, then, has the *past* been to us; and what is the nature of that influence, which it is now exerting upon us? Has there been waste of life, waste of power, waste of feeling, waste of mind, waste of soul? And is it this waste that is now telling on us, and making us so unlike what we ought to be? Have these past twelve months been but links in a long chain of vanities, pleasures, dreams, disappointments, follies, sins? And is it this that is now telling upon our present, and stamping it with a character, which we feel to be infinitely undesirable, as well as perilous in the extreme?

Let us deal honestly with ourselves. Let us examine our present; let us understand its connection with the past; and let us gather up eagerly the teachings which such a scrutiny must inevitably present to us. So shall the past not be wholly lost; so shall the present be extricated from the connection in which it stands with past evil; or rather, all that evil shall be transmuted into good.

What is the *future* to us? It stands before us, with its cloud of uncertainties; and into that cloud we must enter. Is it then exercising a right influence upon us? Are we better men because of this prospect? Are we becoming holier, truer, greater, more fervent, more prayerful, more watchful? It is said that men, living in a region of mountains, whose peaks and cliffs are the resort of the mist, and the tempest, and the thunder, acquire a higher character and a bolder will; so ought it to be with us; looking perpetually on that mountainous future that faces us, with all its crowding mists, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness."

To speak, however, of our connection with the past and the future, is to speak vaguely. Connection with the great Being in whose hands are all our pasts, presents, and futures, is the really weighty point. His being and will spread over the whole breadth of these three regions of life; for He *was*, and He *is*, and He *is to come*; and He is the same *yesterday*, and *to-day*, and *for ever*; "from everlasting to everlasting God."

That it may be well with us, He, and we must be at one; having no separate interest, or walk, or will. His past must be our past; His present our present; His future our future. Our *was* must be linked to His *was*; our *is* to His *is*; our *to come* to His *to come*. Disjunction, alienation, enmity, in such a case, can be to us nothing save sorrow, and darkness, and alarm. If, during the "yesterday" of our life, we have secured this oneness, through the reconciling and cementing blood; then it is well with us "to-day," and it will be well with us "for ever." But if there be

still no sure reconciliation, and no conscious relationship, then is our whole being, with all its interests, and hopes, and longings, still in jeopardy, like a ship, without anchor, sail, or pilot, drifting shorewards, in the night of storm.

The life of a sinner, as such, can only end in the second death. If it is to end in gladness, and to run on into the life everlasting, it must be *begun over again*. The evil does not merely lie in the leaves and branches of the tree, but in the stem and root; the sap is tainted, and unless that is healed, all efforts at improvement are vain. It was this, evidently, that the Lord meant to tell Nicodemus, when he startled him with the awful words, "Ye must be born again." Our whole life must be treated as utterly evil, our spiritual life-blood thoroughly corrupted; and no remedy can be of any use save that which goes to the very source. The sinner's life must be recommenced from its very first outset. It is not merely to be gone over and retouched; but it is to be *begun anew*, as if it had never existed before. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" John iii. 3.

#### WITNESSES TO THE SAVIOUR.

The heavens gave witness. A new star passed through the sky at His incarnation; and at His crucifixion, for three hours the sun was darkened.

The winds and seas gave witness when, at His word the tempest was hushed, and rough billows smoothed into a calm. At the same word the inhabitants of the waters crowded around the ship, and filled the net of the astonished and worshipping disciples.

The earth gave witness. At His death and at His resurrection it trembled to its centre.

Disease gave witness. Fevers were rebuked; the blind saw their deliverer; the dumb published His glory; the sick of the palsy were made whole; and the lepers were cleansed at His bidding.

The grave gave witness when Lazarus came forth, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose.

The invisible world gave witness. Devils acknowledged His divinity, and fled from His presence. Angels ministered to him in the desert, the garden, and the tomb. A multitude sang an anthem in the air, in the hearing of the shepherds; and as our risen Lord ascended up to glory they accompanied Him.—*Herald of the Truth.*