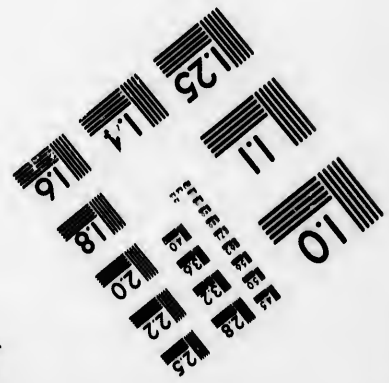
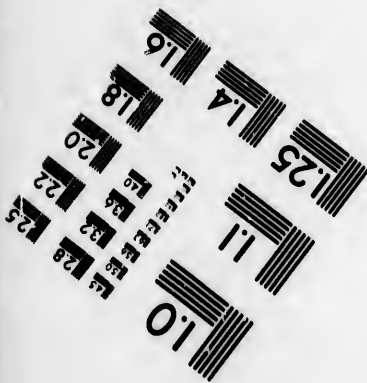
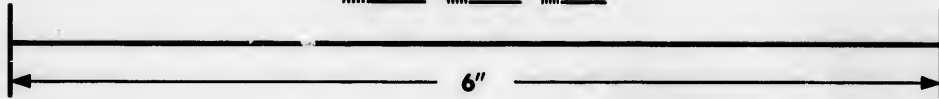
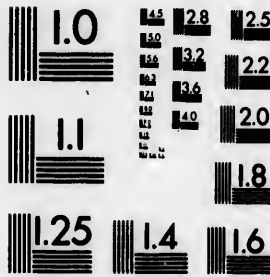


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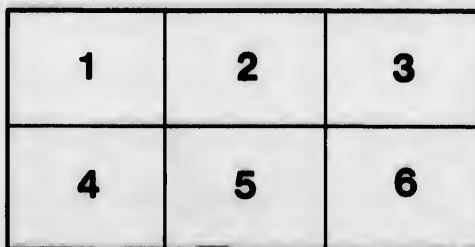
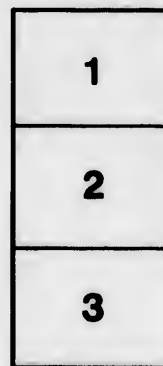
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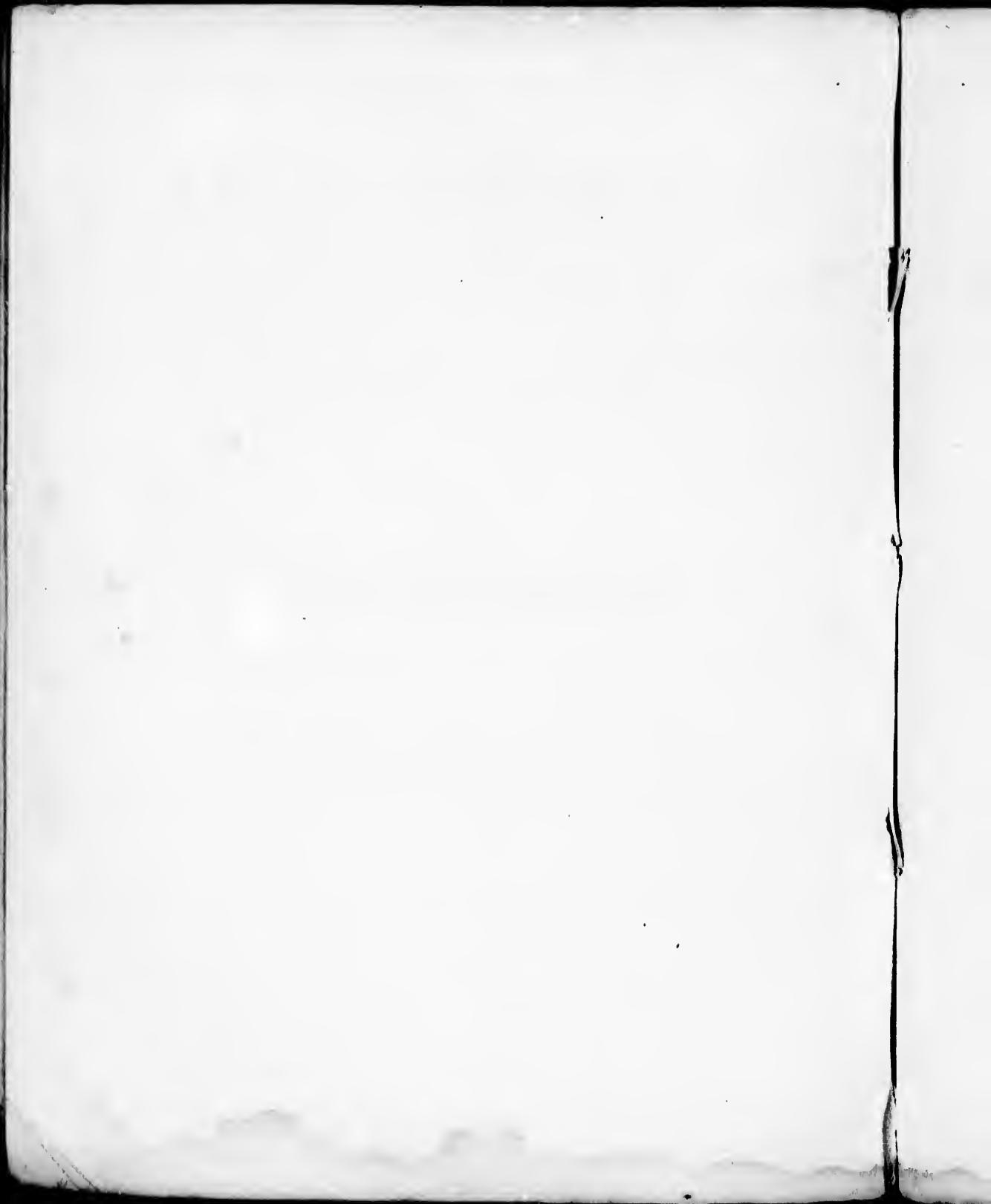
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THE
RIVER OF LIFE.



THE
RIVER OF LIFE:

IN
EZEKIEL'S VISION.

A PLEA FOR HOME MISSIONS.

BY THE
REV. ALEXANDER TOPP, A.M.,
OF KNOX'S CHURCH, TORONTO.

TORONTO:
JAMES CAMPBELL.
1860.

TORONTO:
LOVELL AND GIBSON, PRINTERS, YONGE STREET.

THE RIVER OF LIFE.

EZEKIEL xlvii. 8, 9.

“Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea ; which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

“And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live.”

THESE words are part of a vision presented to the prophet Ezekiel. He was one of the captive Jews in the land of Chaldea, and dwelt with a settlement of his countrymen on the banks of the river Chebar, about two hundred miles to the north of Babylon. He prophesied in the commencement of the captivity, as Daniel did towards the close of it. The addresses which he delivered, were chiefly intended to show the house of Judah their sins, to arouse them to a sense of their guilt, and to humble them under the conviction of their aggravated transgressions, which had caused their banishment from the land of their birth

In the latter part of his prophecies, however, he seems to have been commissioned to hold out the prospect of better days to come to the Church and people of God, and thus to encourage them to the good work of repentance and reformation.

The concluding chapters from the 40th relate a most remarkable vision with which he was favoured. Its subject was a magnificent temple, seen by him from a very high mountain in the land of Israel, to which, in the visions of God, he had been brought. We have a description, at great length, of its measurement, its extent, its construction in the minutest parts, the duties of the priesthood, and the offerings and sacrifices to be presented. Into the interpretation of all, or of any part of this descriptive record, we do not enter, not only because it would be foreign to our present purpose to do so, but also for this simple reason :—that we do not profess to be able satisfactorily to explain it. There is much throughout the prophecies of Ezekiel that is emblematic and figurative, dark and obscure. And accordingly, the Jewish Rabbis did not allow a considerable portion of them to be read to the people, till they were about thirty years of age, lest, on account of their inability to apprehend the mysteries contained in it, they should imbibe any prejudices against the sacred writings in

general. We do not mention this with approbation : we do not mean to say that the obscurity of any part of divine revelation is to be regarded as a valid and sufficient reason why we should let it alone and not meddle with it at all ; on the contrary, we read regarding the Revelation of John, to which the prophecies of Ezekiel bear a very close and intimate resemblance, " Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein : for the time is at hand." All that we would say with reference to such passages of the Word of God is, that while we ought to seek an enlightened understanding of them under the guidance of the Spirit of God, experience and history go to teach us that our proper place is not that of dogmatic expounders of them, but rather that of humble scholars at the feet of Him who alone can interpret His own predictions, waiting for light from on high, and for events as they fall out in providence, to make the record clear and intelligible to all.

There are those who look upon the temple seen by the prophet in vision, as descriptive of the first temple—the temple of Solomon. There are others who view it as designed to be a pattern for the second temple, to be built on their return from the captivity. But though in some respects there may be claims put

forth, apparently well founded, on the part of the advocates of these two opinions, it seems impossible for any one to read these chapters with an unprejudiced mind, and not have the impression forcibly made upon him, that the temple here delineated far exceeds in extent and size either the one or the other, and that therefore it must represent something vastly superior; in short, a state of the Church more glorious and blessed than any that they had hitherto seen. And we can easily understand why the Church, enlarged, full of the blessing of God, enriched by the copious showers of divine grace, making it blossom and bring forth fruit abundantly,—should be so presented to the eye of the prophet. To the Jewish people there could be nothing of true religion dissociated from the city and temple of Jerusalem. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion; on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.” It was the city which Jehovah had chosen above all others to put His name there; and in its temple He had promised peculiarly to manifest His presence and His glory to His waiting people. Jerusalem, then, with its temple, was the delight of their hearts—the centre of their brightest hopes and purest affections; so that a flourishing condition of the Church, under the plenteous

enjoyment of gospel privileges and blessings, could be presented by no emblem more likely to touch and affect their hearts than that of a splendid temple in the city of Jerusalem, with its priesthood, and sacrifices, and offerings, and all the ordinances of divine worship, in a higher and more imposing degree than they had ever witnessed before.

But, not to dwell further on the vision generally, you will observe that the chapter from which our text is taken, opens with a discovery which the prophet had made at the door of the temple. Though he had been engaged in surveying and measuring it, yet what he now relates he appears only to have seen for the first time under the guidance of the person who showed him the whole. "Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house: and behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward; for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar." (*Ver. 1.*) And of these waters, it is intimated to him in the words of our text, "These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea; which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which

moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither, for they shall be healed; *and everything shall live whither the river cometh.*”

It is plain, beyond all question, that this part of the vision is emblematic and figurative, confirming most clearly the idea which we have already stated, that the rest of it partakes of the same character. And adopting this view of the passage, it is our purpose to use it, in order to set forth and apply the great truths which it brings before us, as to the design and efficacy of the river of life, and also our own privilege and duty accordingly, as individuals, and congregations, and Churches.

We propose, in handling the subject, to enquire:
I. What are those waters, and whence they come?
II. Whither they proceed, and the effects which they produce?

I. What are these waters, and whence they come? You know that throughout Scripture, water is frequently employed to denote spiritual blessings, or the Spirit of God, as bringing along with Him all the benefits of the Gospel salvation into the heart. Thus, for example, it is promised, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry

ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." So in Psalm xlvi.: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." And then the invitation of the gospel runs in these terms: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." It will not, therefore, be disputed by any one that the river which the prophet beheld, denotes the gospel with all its blessings of mercy and grace, which alone can cleanse and purify, as well as cheer and gladden the souls of men.

"These waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward." We are informed that in the temple of old, there was water brought from a neighbouring fountain to wash away the blood and all the impurities arising from the slaying of the animals which were offered in sacrifice, and then conveyed away in pipes, so as to keep the floor of the temple clean and pure. But this cannot be the water that is here meant, inasmuch as *it* was carried off *underground*, whereas the *stream that the prophet saw* issued out to the surface and ran *above ground* from the temple. Now, understanding the waters as symbolizing the blessings of the gospel, we here learn their origin or source. "They issued out from under the threshold of the house." Christ is the temple. He speaks of Himself also as the

door. To Him, therefore, as the fountain, we are to trace these living waters, just as it is written in the last chapter of the book of Revelation : " He showed me a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." And further, these waters were presented to the prophet in vision, as coming from a temple in the Holy City, because " out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." *There* that death was accomplished, which opened up the fountain, and drew forth those streams of living water which are destined to regenerate a fallen world ; *there* the glad tidings of salvation were first proclaimed by the Apostles in obedience to the command of their risen Lord ; and *there* the healing efficacy of the Gospel was first powerfully exhibited on the day of Pentecost, when, through the preaching of Peter, the Spirit of God rendered the Word effectual to the conversion of about three thousand souls.

The increase of these waters as they ran onwards from the temple is next to be noticed. Going along by the side of them, under the direction of the man who had the line in his hand, and who measured a thousand cubits therewith, the prophet was brought through the waters, and the waters were to the ancles. Proceeding for another thousand cubits by the margin

of the stream, they recrossed it, and at this distance the waters were to the knees. Again the same measurement is made on the other side, and when now they went through, the waters were to the loins. "Afterward," it is added, "he measured another thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass over, for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over."

The meaning of this, the lesson here intended to be taught, cannot be mistaken. It evidently points out: 1st. The gradual yet ever-increasing spread of the Gospel of Christ, from the time when it was first proclaimed in the City of Jerusalem by a few humble, plain, illiterate, uninfluential, but devoted followers of the crucified Emmanuel. The enmity and corruption of the natural heart—the bitterness of Jewish unbelief—the pride of human philosophy—the determined opposition of earthly rulers—the superstitions of heathen idolatry have not been able to withstand its progress. The river of life, the stream of gospel truth, has run on from land to land, from the old continent to the new, from nation to nation, from one island to another, carrying in its bosom life and fertility, and all that is fitted to elevate and dignify man and ameliorate the condition of our race. Everything that hinders its advance is slowly yet surely

melting away under its benign influence. And we look confidently forward to the time when it shall be a river that nothing will be able to pass over. "The mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it." We have here an emblem : 2nd. Of the gradual increase of the Church—the increasing numbers of those who are witnesses for Christ and His truth, faithful subjects of Messiah the Prince. The one hundred and twenty believers who assembled in a large upper room in the City of Jerusalem, have swelled into myriads of ransomed saints, who having served the Lord upon the earth have been translated from the Church militant to the Church triumphant in heaven, and many more who now count it their honor and dignity to uphold the interests of the Redeemer's cause. Popery has its multitudes of deluded adherents—so has the false prophet. Pagan idolatry counts its votaries by hundreds of millions—infidelity and erroneous systems of religion are keeping multitudes in subjection to the sway of the great usurper—the visible Church has its crowds of inconsistent, timid, cold-hearted, temporizing professors ; still, blessed be God, there are many thousands throughout the earth, who, in the face of the world, are not ashamed or afraid to stand up for Jesus, as the only Redeemer of man, as alone entitled to the homage of the heart and conscience. And these

are the glory, the safety of any city or nation. May the Lord greatly increase the number of such in every land. We are assured that whilst the adherents of every other cause will gradually melt away, the standard of the King of Righteousness will attract and gather round it an ever-enlarging host of leal-hearted and devoted soldiers, who, under His guidance, and in His name and strength, will go forth, conquering and to conquer, till the whole earth be subdued to the Lord. Blessed are they who, through divine grace, have been enabled to take their place amongst those under the banners of the great Captain of Salvation. For they who at length shall stand upon Mount Zion with Jesus as their head, are described as "the chosen, and called, and faithful, following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." We are reminded here : 3rd. Of the gradual, yet certain, progress of the truth in the hearts of individual believers. The feeble, tottering child, scarcely able to bear his own weight, becomes, in course of time, a strong and vigorous man. The tender twig, just springing out of the ground, which you could bend in any direction you please, afterwards grows up into the sturdy tree which all your strength cannot move. The little rill, trickling down the mountain side, gradually swells in volume and extent till it expands into the noble river,

bearing on its surface richly laden vessels forward to the mighty ocean. Even so, the incorruptible seed of the Word, once sown by the divine hand in the heart of man, cannot be destroyed. It may be at first but the day of small things, which, however others may contemn, God will not despise. He will never forsake the work of His own hands, but will perfect that which concerneth his people. "Being confident of this very thing," says the Apostle, "that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "Fear not," it is written for the encouragement of all trembling believing souls, "fear not, O worm Jacob, thou shalt yet thrash the mountains." "Fear not, I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death."

II. Whither do these waters go, and what are the effects produced ? "These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea, which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed." If you examine a map of Palestine, or, if you are acquainted with the geography of that country, you will know that between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, which lay to the south-east of that city, there was a rather mountainous district of country, not so well peopled as the rest of

the territory of the tribe of Judah, and therefore called a desert. There, you may remember, David found a refuge for himself when he had to flee from the jealousy and malice of Saul, and when, as he tells us, he was hunted from one hiding-place to another, like a bird upon the mountains, "It was told Saul, as he returned from following the Philistines, behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi."* Again, "He abode in the wilderness in strongholds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph."† So also Maon, where he and his followers consorted with the herdsmen and shepherds of Nabal, is spoken of as a wilderness.‡ These districts are all in the part of the country referred to in our text, through which the river is said to flow. "And it shall come to pass that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live."

Now, what does this denote? Plainly, that even in the most destitute places, where all has been as a moral desert, no spiritual beauty on which the eye of God could rest with complacency, where people have been living without hope and without God in the world, steeped in worldliness and indifference about their souls and a future state, minding only the things of this present state of existence, let but the river of

*1 Sam. xxiv. 1.

† 1 Sam. xxiii. 14.

‡ 1 Sam. xxv. 1, 2, 4.

the water of life flow in amongst them—let the ordinances of religion be dispensed—let the doctrines of the cross, the story of Heaven's love be faithfully and affectionately made known, let the heart and conscience be plied with the terrors of the law, and the melting appeals of the Gospel, and let the Spirit of God accompany the same with His efficacious power, then will spring up life instead of death, and the fruits of righteousness, where all before was barrenness and desolation. We have read of, and we have seen unproductive tracts of country transformed by wise and toilsome cultivation into fertile fields of waving grain for the sustenance and benefit of man, and the natural landscape beautified and adorned by human skill and labor. But not less wonderful is the change in a spiritual aspect where the river of the water of life comes. Let it flow into any heart, whose thoughts are not of God at all, and that man is ushered, as it were, into a new state of existence. He starts up like one awakened out of sleep, to discover his guilt, his danger in the sight of God, his urgent need of salvation through the blood and Spirit of Christ. He leaves the broad road that leadeth to destruction, he enters in by the strait gate, and along the narrow way that leadeth unto life. Let it flow into any family where godlessness reigned—let the members of that household drink

of its life-giving and elevating streams, and immediately the voice of joy and salvation, of prayer and praise, is heard in that dwelling. Purity and peace, and all that is amiable and useful, take up their abode there, and diffuse their hallowed influence around. Let it flow into any community or amongst any people where ignorance and earthly-mindedness formed the characteristic features—let them discern the preciousness of its waters, and drink of the same—let them realize their healing, purifying power, and then souls are quickened from death, spiritual things are seen to be stern realities, death, and judgment and eternity assert their proper influence, sin is forsaken and put away, God is honored and His law is upheld, the beauties of holiness shine forth on every side—God rests in His love, the wilderness blooms and blossoms as the rose. “Everything shall live whither the river cometh.” There is no life but where it runs, and wherever it does flow, there is life, life to God, that which alone can be called life, life on earth which shall issue in life eternal.

Further, not only do “the waters go down into the desert, but they go into the sea, which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.” From the mention in the 10th verse of Engedi on the one side, and Eneglaim on the other, it is evident that the

sea here spoken of is the Dead or Salt Sea, that standing monument of the fearful indignation and wrath of Heaven, and under whose waters were buried the cities of the plain, what was once a rich and fertile plain. Their inhabitants had been guilty of the most abominable crimes, "sinners before the Lord exceedingly," so that His justice would not allow them to remain any longer on the earth. And now above these cities lie the sluggish, unpleasant waters of a lake around whose shores every traveller perceives nothing but barrenness and an unearthly gloom. "According to the testimony of all antiquity, and the most modern travellers," says Dr. Robinson, of New York, in his valuable work on the Holy Land, "there exists within the waters of the Dead Sea no living thing, no trace indeed of animal or vegetable life. Our own experience, so far as we had an opportunity to observe, goes to confirm the truth of this testimony. We perceived no signs of life within the waters." Yet *even there*, the prophet beheld that when the waters from the sanctuary flowed into it, the waters were healed. "And it shall come to pass that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither, for they shall be healed, and everything shall

live whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto Eneglaim ; they shall be a place to spread forth nets ; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many," v. 9, 10.

The truth here manifestly set forth is the power of the Gospel of Christ to reach the very lowest depths of pollution, and guilt, and crime—to cleanse the hearts of those who have been guilty of the worst and most revolting sins, to rescue such as are most firmly bound in the chains of Satan, and to bring them out into the light, and the life and the liberty of the free-born sons of God. The grace that is stored up in Jesus Christ can change, as has been many a time proved since the days of Paul, the blood-thirsty persecutor into a devoted servant and follower of His own. The outcast daughters of shamelessness and misery—the besotted drunkard—the abandoned profligate—the daring infidel, and those who are wallowing in the very mire, are all welcome to drink of this healing stream, and be saved for ever. Let the river run into any den of iniquity, however loathsome and filthy, and even there, its waters, applied by the hand of omnipotent grace and love, can purge the most guilty conscience, and transform the hearts of the vilest into fit habitations for the God of Heaven. We

rejoice in the efforts which are now put forth in these days of blessed revival throughout the Churches, to direct the river of the water of life, not only into the distant fields of Paganism, and the benighted isles of the Gentiles, but into the haunts of vice and practical heathenism in large cities, and into the destitute places of professedly Christian lands. "For every thing shall live whither the river cometh." It is the only, the effectual remedy for spiritual disease in the case of individuals, and for all the virulent disorders and festering sores, which paralyse a nation's strength, and spread their baneful influence all around. Legislators, who have the best interests of the people at heart, may frame laws for the suppression of vice, of everything that openly outrages religion and sound morality, and all such legislation we would gratefully hail. Societies may be formed, and means may be taken, to reform the outward character, to bring men from sinful, and degrading and ruinous habits, ruinous both for time and for eternity—let all such, when based on right and scriptural principles, be zealously prosecuted, and may the Lord Himself give them His countenance and blessing. But above all, let the Church of the living God—let such as have experienced the healing efficacy of the water of life, so that they realize it within them as a well of water springing up

into everlasting life, never forget that the Gospel of Christ and that alone, is the power of God, and the wisdom of God, unto salvation—that the Gospel alone can reach the root of the evil, of all moral and social evil, and that just as it pervades the hearts of men, so shall oppression, injustice, intemperance, iniquity of every kind be banished, and all that is excellent and lovely, and of good report, flourish and abound. “Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before Him, and shall set us in the way of His steps.”*

The important truths which the passage under consideration has thus brought before us, will be at once felt by you, as presenting an impressive and powerful plea in behalf of the Home Missionary operations of our church, the efforts of the church to carry the waters of life and salvation, and the ordinances of the Gospel, into the destitute places of our cities and land. In support of this plea we observe :—

1. That the native tendency of the truth is to spread

* Psalm lxxxv. 9-13.

itself. He who has been spiritually healed himself, has been so not only for his own sake, but for the glory of Christ, and for the good of others. Hence you read in the 12th verse, "And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed : it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because the waters they issued out of the sanctuary, and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." In other words, they who have been healed by the waters of the sanctuary, and who live upon the banks of the river—they who have been quickened by the Spirit of Christ, and are nourished by habitual prayerful attendance on the word and ordinances, shall not only live to God, and prosper in the divine life, as fruitful trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified, but their fruit shall be for meat, and their leaf for medicine—they shall be for the spiritual healing and nourishment of others around them. They have been put in possession of the balm that is in Gilead, that they may speak of and commend its healing virtues, that by their example they may exhibit its power, and the love, and grace and skill of the great Physician. Ever bear in mind, believers, your high and holy vocation, even to show forth the

praises of your Redeemer. In whatever way God in His Providence sets before you a door of usefulness in your respective spheres, be ready to enter in by that door—yea, be searching out means and opportunities of usefulness. And were all in any congregation who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, giving their hearts and putting their hands in right earnest to the work of the Lord, some in one way, and some in another, either in religiously instructing the young, or in seeking to guard and preserve youth from the paths in which destroyers go, or in deeds of charity and benevolence, in works of faith and labors of love, in warning, reproof and exhorting the ungodly, in guiding anxious enquirers, or encouraging one another in the Lord, then would the goings of God in their midst be seen and felt by themselves, and all around would be constrained to acknowledge that God was with them of a truth. God, even their God, would bless them abundantly.

2. The very design of the Church of Christ is to send forth from itself the waters of life and salvation. What is true of believers individually, is true of them collectively. "Freely," says Christ, "freely ye have received, freely give." And that congregation or church, which is absorbed in its own concerns, which is taking no thought about the welfare of others, and putting forth

no efforts for the benefit of the world, that lieth in the wicked one, cannot be in a healthy or flourishing state. The spirit of life and love is not cherished there. For the spirit of Christ is the spirit of compassion and love to perishing souls. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Wherever the Spirit of Christ reigns, selfishness is cast down. "No man," says the Apostle, "liveth to himself." And so we may add, "No church liveth to itself." The Church is the Lord's institution, to carry on His work upon the earth—to extend His kingdom—to enter the domains of Satan—to assail his strongholds—to wrest subjects from his grasp, and to convert them into loyal subjects of Messiah the King. Hence it is only answering the great end of its existence, when it looks abroad upon the world lying in wickedness with an eye of compassion and love, and sends Missionaries of the cross to the heathen and Jewish field, or when it embraces within its sympathies and prayerful labors, the ignorant, destitute and depraved around itself. And we feel assured that we make a statement which will be concurred in by all who seek the welfare of this land, and desire that it be taken possession of for the Lord, when we say that the different sections of the Church of Christ amongst us are peculiarly called on to look to the condition of those who in distant settlements of the country are without

a stated ministry, and the regular dispensation of the means of grace, with the view of aiding them to the enjoyment of that great blessing. We all know that the natural tendency of the heart, especially in the case of those whose anxieties are necessarily much directed to their temporal interests, is, when the things of salvation are not habitually pressed upon them, to sink down into carelessness and unconcern: and as families grow up under that influence, the evil is perpetuated, and irreligion becomes the prevailing feature of the place. "*But everything shall live whither the river cometh.*" Every church, with its Heaven-appointed ordinances in any distant locality, becomes a centre from which the waters of life and salvation flow. And when the blessing of God is vouchsafed, then there is a shaking among the dry bones, souls are born unto God—witnesses are raised up, both among the old and the young, for Christ—and what was once a moral desert is now a well-watered garden of the Lord. "And he said unto me, son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. Now when I had returned, behold at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other,"*—such trees as have been already mentioned—"whose leaf shall not fade,

* Verses 6, 7.

neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed.”* We can conceive no higher object of Christian benevolence and real philanthropy than that of filling the land with the streams of the water of life, providing the channels in which they are appointed to flow, and praying that the Spirit of God may Himself go along with them in all His convincing and converting and sanctifying power. And were the churches in the land really alive to their duty, and putting forth their resources in that direction, and were Christian men who have been saved with an everlasting salvation, to realize their obligations to the Lord who bought them with His blood, then might we look for the fulfilment in some measure at least, of the words of Scripture, “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders.”† “Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah and thy land Beulah, for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.”‡

3. The best interests of the country demand such exertions. The spirit of real patriotism is to countenance and foster whatever tends to improve and ameliorate the condition and character of the people, and to deny oneself for that object. And what can

* Verse 12.

† Isaiah lx. 18.

‡ Isaiah lxii, 4.

contribute so powerfully to make a loyal, contented, and happy nation, as the principles of the Gospel pervading it from one end to the other? What can so conduce to the exercise of good government—to the promotion of civil and religious liberty? What will so much help to promote a sound and religious education—to banish ignorance—to put down injustice, intemperance, and every form of social evil and vice, and thus to advance the prosperity of a nation? Let there be a God-fearing people, and upon them the blessing of God will not fail to rest. Why has Britain remained unshaken among the nations of Europe, whilst they have been convulsed by revolutions and by intestine commotions and wars? Why has she stood forth as the bulwark of liberty, the asylum of the refugee, the friend of the oppressed, and the enemy of tyranny? Why has she advanced in temporal prosperity? And why has she been honored to do so much for the extension of the Redeemer's cause, though alas! far short of what she might have done? Simply, because the river of the water of life flows throughout its borders. And so it will be with any land where the people drink of the river of life and rejoice therein.

Canada has peculiar claims upon the missionary exertions of the Protestant Churches which have taken root within its borders. Who can tell what this vast

and growing Province may come to in the course of years? What a large population may be found in it? And what greatness and power it may attain to as a nation? Look at the position which the United States, as an independent nation, now occupy? And who can tell what may be the future of Canada? Surely, then, in this land, where the foundations of what may yet be a mighty empire are being laid; where Popery is putting forth its deadly, enslaving power; and where, by persons of erroneous creeds and from different countries, sentiments are put forth at variance with the truth of God, there ought to be the leavening of the people with the principles of the Word of God,—those principles which alone can make a nation great; and enable it to further the grand object which God has in view—His purpose from the beginning, viz., the subjection of the earth to the reign of His Son. Every consideration, then, of Christian duty—of zeal for the conversion of souls and the glory of Christ—of real patriotism—and of anxiety for the future welfare of the people,—calls upon Churches and Christian men to come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty; and to do what in them lies, through the grace of God, that the waters of life and salvation may flow forth abundantly, and be supplied, as necessity demands, to

the growing population of the land, that thus none may perish from a famine of the Word of God.

But, as we are reminded from the last sentence, though persons may perish from a famine of the Word of God, yet others may perish with the waters of life flowing by their side. "But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof shall not be healed, they shall be given to salt."* The Gospel of Christ heals and saves just as it is believed on and taken into the heart. It blesses and makes alive only as it is received in faith and love. You may stand and see the river of life running past your doors, and yet you may refuse to stoop to drink of its life-giving streams; and if you do so, if you will not come to Christ that you may have life, you cannot be healed, you shall be given to salt—you shall become as pillars of salt, eternal monuments of the wrath of the Lamb, because of mercy abused, and love insulted and despised. "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Oh! do not any of you bring that fearful doom upon yourselves, whilst the invitation goes forth as free and unfettered as ever. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say

* Verse 11.

Come, and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

PREACHED IN KNOX'S CHURCH, TORONTO, ON THE
8TH APRIL, 1860, IN BEHALF OF THE HOME
MISSIONS OF THE CHURCH.

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