

Associational Sermon.

A GLIMPSE AT DEITY.

PREACHED BEFORE THE P. E. ISLAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, MONDAY THE 19TH OF JULY. BY REV. W. B. HAYNES.

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Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?—Ex. xv. 11.

It was thus the proud Israelite sang, as he stood by the waters of the Red Sea, on the morning after the overthrow of the Egyptians—at least, this is one note, and perhaps the chief, in that glad song of triumph. The children of Israel had just passed through a season of the most intense excitement. Not many hours previously the people had been expecting nothing but utter destruction at the hands of the Egyptians, the sound of whose approach had already reached them. But a Divine interposition, such as must have astonished the boldest faith, had wrought their complete deliverance, and now their once dreaded pursuers slept harmlessly beneath the deep rolling waters, or lay lifeless and ghastly upon either shore. Then, as they hushed for awhile their excited thoughts, to recall with truer distinctness the events, almost bewildering, through which they had so recently passed,—how, with relentless hand, the great I AM had scattered and destroyed the Egyptian gods to avenge His holiness: with lavish strength charging each successive hour with fresh marvels of His might,—they at length, with one consent, burst forth into triumphant song, in the midst of which, when adoration had attained its loftiest excellence, a million grateful hearts cast the laurel of victory before the throne of Jehovah, as they sang in the words of the text: "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods! Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

Having thus indicated the circumstances which suggested the words forming the subject of our inquiry, let us now seek earnestly to discover their meaning.

The subject is an awful one. We are to meditate upon Jehovah—the holy, the adored—the Almighty. It behoves us therefore to enter upon it with deepest reverence. Holy one of Israel, suffer us, enfolded in the righteousness of Jesus, to enter awhile into Thine immediate presence, that we may behold Thy glory, and worship Thee, the God of the whole earth.

First, we have in the past *A Glimpse of Deity*. In the second place we will notice its effect upon the beholders.

I. *A Glimpse of Deity*. God is described as, "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders."

(1.) God is "glorious in holiness."

Jehovah is infinitely pure. His character shines with stainless lustre. This perfection, encompassing His throne, surrounds it with an unimaginable glory. Holiness appears to be, before all others, the special attribute of God, the Divinely glory of the Deity. Hence, when God would seal the covenant of grace by oath, and swear to His determination that the throne of David and his seed should endure for ever, He took this, His special attribute, and swore by His holiness. Unlike Wisdom and Power which, delegated to the creature, have been used in the service of sin. Holiness can never exist, except in the fullest sympathy with God, and departs instantly at sin's feeblest approach. It is in the light of this, Jehovah's distinguishing excellence, that we are most struck with the wide and immeasurable distance which must ever sever the creature from the Creator. "Worship at His footstool, for He is holy." It is the nature of God to be thus holy; with Him sin is an impossibility, while perfect righteousness is a necessary property of His Being. This disposition partakes of the immutable and infinite character of its Divine source.—The gorgeous splendour which envelops the Eternal Throne, emanating from Him who is the only source of all good—that pure light of God has never known the faintest momentary defilement, nor ever shall.—Extend the sun into measureless space; afford to its every particle an infinite brilliance and purity; and in a universe of ineffable light we may discern some faint figure of the holiness of God. Upspringing from its one eternal source, infinite in fulness, of unlimited glory, changeless, and eternal: imagination altogether fails to conceive the unseparable glory of Him who is thus, in Himself alone considered, "glorious in holiness."

Of this fact how keen, how true, must be the realization, by spirits in heaven there, where that glory ever shines, unobscured by sins, mists, and clouds. Truly, in the hearts of celestial beings, He is glorious. Nor can He be otherwise to His people on earth, who, following at humbler distance, yet feel it their highest joy to commune with Him. Yes, Lord, Thou art "glorious in holiness" to our hearts. There have been seasons, however, in which God in His holiness has appeared to be specially illustrious. Who has not read with feelings of strange interest the terrible story of the flood, when the affrighted world, startled from haunts of iniquity, perished despairing in its chill embrace, and but "eight souls were saved." In the deluging of a fair world with water to wash out its deep stains of guilt, Jehovah was, indeed, with startling emphasis, "glorious in holiness." To a similar occasion we owe the language of our text. Then, so imposing was the exhibition of that glory, that Moses, flooded with its splendour, and urged by an irresistible impulse, matched the sublime conception, and immortalised it in song; for the idols of Egypt had withered; and the might of Egypt had faltered; and the scorn of Egypt had melted; and the very soul of Egypt had been consumed by the scorching fury of that quenchless sun. What language proceeds from the tabernacle in the wilderness? What truth appears in the countless laws, and ceremonies, and rites, which trammelled the feet of the pilgrim Israelite, and asserted their right to direct their most trivial acts? Holy vessels and holy things—altar, sacrifice, priests, vestments, days, places—all holy; and then, the Holiest of all, that awful retreat where Deity dwelt alone. What means this ceaseless repetition? All these things were to the fickle Israelites as so many voices from God, and 'twas thus that Jehovah daily declared Himself "glorious in holiness." But there was a time—once in the annals of our world—when holiness shone forth with such resplendent glory, that the Eternal took down the mantle of night and flung it over the scene, lest the sight of such glory should be too much for the astonished universe.

Little did the men who gambled gluttonously before the dying Son of God dream of the stupendous event that was then transpiring. His frame might writhe in excruciating agonies. What cared they? Here was a garment at stake, the gaining of which might purchase for the happy winner an extra hour or two of debauchery and shame. Let him die. But, on that day, and in that very spot, mercy and truth met together; righteousness and peace kissed each other; and it was then seen that God could "be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." There, Grace, with the free and honorable consent of Justice, issued a proclamation of peace and pardon to the fallen sons of Adam. Holiness extended to a guilty world the hand of welcome, and Christ, the Son of God, forgot His griefs in that last expiring shout of victory: "It is finished." Thus, again—and this time the sun of the glory of God's holiness attained, in the sight of His creatures, a meridian height and splendour from which it shall never set—was God seen to be "glorious in holiness."

(2.) But we must now pass on to the second portion of the description. God is also "fearful in praises." And, indeed, what could be more fitting? It is meet that He who is so eminently illustrious should receive this additional appellation. Not unadvisedly was this sublime title bestowed. As the smoke of the incense of Jehovah's praise, mounting in vast columns, reaches and enraptures the seat of Deity, the created, beholding Him from afar, and filled with speechless awe, prostrate themselves in humblest adoration before Him who is "fearful in praises." Just as the traveller, nearing some lofty mountain whose fame and story have long since thrilled his soul, and which he expects at every turn will burst upon him for the first time in all its grandeur—as he remembers the glowing language of those who have stood, emmet-like, in its shadow—finds stealing upon him an overwhelming sense of awe as though already he bowed before his majesty; so the devout spirit, approaching Him up to whose throne have surged in swelling waves of ceaseless adoration the plaudits of eternal ages, bows with a more crushing sense of utter insignificance as it worships Him whose very praises inspire such awful reverence.

Nor could Egypt dispute the right of her Conqueror to this proud title. Struck to the earth, bruised and shattered by the Omnipotent arm, there must have been an inexplicable meaning, a dreadful sincerity, in the silent praise that rose heavenward from that prostrate people, while, with less of slavish dread, but with a truer reverence and more acceptable devotion, the emancipated sons of Israel worshipped their great Deliverer. Alike from friend and foe God had obtained the glory that was due. Jehovah will be glorified. For His glory all things consist. This is as certainly true with respect to His fiercest enemies as it is of His most loyal subjects. Think you that crowned heads, or armies clad in steel, can refuse the tribute of His praise? Go to Babylon, or to the spot indicated by tradition's uncertain finger where stood that mighty city. Once here, within vast walls, there dwelt a powerful people, and stupendous armies guarded the city gates. Ambition led those armies; yet they only served the purpose of the King of kings, whose worship they had discarded for the vilest idolatry. Blindly supposing themselves to be in successful pursuit of their own selfish policy, they accomplish His purposes, and when He had done with them He destroyed them. Thus has many a proud tyrant arisen and, over heaps of ruins and piles of dead, has clambered to a throne. He has laughed at his success and boasted his boundless liberty. But what has he been? The mere lackey of the court of heaven, whose errands he has the better performed because permitted to wear the "livery of the king." Oh, Thou fearful in praises? Even the wrath of man contributes to thy glory. But who shall say that such exacted acknowledgments as these are not far exceeded in worth and heavenly welcome by the willing offering of the loyal servants of God? The prisoner in the dungeon clanks his chain, and mutters curses on the power he cannot baffle. This is homage. But more welcome far, to the sovereign, are the glad acclamations of the thronging multitude, as he passes in state through their midst. Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion. Though Thine enemies despise Thee, and bring no offering to Thine altar, we Thy people, glad to acknowledge our allegiance to such a King, present to Thee with willing hearts our humble gifts. Thus, from the church of God scattered the wide world over, there rises the ceaseless music of adoring praise. Uttered in tongues many and diverse, proceeding from out the gloom of poverty, or uprising from prosperity's glad dwelling; passing, laden and slow, from the trembling lip of age, or gaily leaping from the chords of a youthful heart—the innumerable strains mingle in one glad chorus at the footstool of Jehovah. And, indeed, so vast and astonishing has been the liberality of God towards His people that they have long regarded the obligation upon them to accord equal praise as hopelessly impossible. Yet involved in so sweet a dilemma, true love with tears of joy, tendereth herself; saying to Him whose praise so far outstrips her:—

"Here, Lord, I give myself away; 'Tis all that I can do."

But the stream of adoration, having its rise in human hearts and lives, is but a tiny tributary of the full river of His praise. All heaven resounds with His worship. "Seraphs, with elevated strains, Circle the throne around; And move, and charm the starry plains, With an immortal sound."

Innumerable angels—ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands—bow in prostrate worship before Him, saying: "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever." "Cherubim and seraphim continually cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." While other sinless spirits, hasting to join the harmony, cheerfully uncrown themselves, singing, as they cast the glittering diadems at His feet: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." In these eternal songs, God's glorified children—those who having shared the conflict and endured the strife, have passed before us to their rest take no mean part; distinguishing mercy, finding them in unusual distress, bestowed upon them peculiar favour. Hence, their praise shall for ever be special and unique. To them it has been permitted to introduce into heaven a grander note of praise than had been heard there in all the vast Eternity before, and angelic fingers linger awhile 'mid golden strings.

"While heaven's eternal arches ring With shouts of sovereign grace." Thus, as the majesty of the presence of God fills the wide heaven with glory, so is it filled with eternal homage by its myriad

inhabitants, ceaselessly adoring Him who is the "fearful in praises." Nor alone does the intelligent creation of God show forth His praise. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." "All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord." From the tiniest flower hidden in the meadow, which one must stoop to discover, to the fairest star that glitters in the heavens; from the silver dewdrop, Child of the Morning, to the proud unfettered deep: all, all unite to worship Him; and, uninterrupted by one inharmonious note, the great family of Nature ceaselessly hymns His praise.

Believer, thou may'st well rejoice that He whom thou lovest should receive such wide homage, though indeed, the full story of His praise can ne'er be told. But there is one delightful truth in addition ere I conclude upon this topic—the fame of our mighty Lord must have a wider spread. "The knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

And when:— "He shall have dominion O'er river, sea, and shore; Far as the eagle's pinion Or dove's light wing can soar."

then shall the promise be fulfilled, "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations;" and so shall He who is "glorious in holiness," be still more illustriously the "fearful in praises."

(To be concluded next week)

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

HOME MISSIONS AND THE CONVENTION.

NO. VI.

Once every year the wisdom and strength of the denomination in these Maritime provinces is summoned to consider every great denominational object among us, one excepted. Why are our provinces thus combined? Is it as some assume, because no one of them singly is able to sustain the objects thus promoted? I think not. On the contrary, I believe that upon due consideration it would be generally admitted that Nova Scotia alone could have supported the College and Academy just as efficiently as it has been done by this united effort. New Brunswick could have done just as much as she has for denominational education, by putting all her funds into her own institution, and each of the provinces just as much for Foreign Missions singly as they have unitedly.

At the outset, and for years afterwards, these objects, did not include the whole work of the Convention. That work was to promote every interest among us. Not one was left out. What then was the design of this compact? If I am not greatly mistaken it was simply this—the best good of the Baptist body in these Provinces. It was believed that combining their knowledge and efforts would render them more efficient and prosperous than they could be otherwise. And who now doubts the correctness of this belief? Many may have grave and reasonable doubts as to the result thus far in the case of any or all of the objects sustained, but I believe all will agree that we have been made wiser and stronger and better by this combination, consequently whatever opinions may be entertained respecting particular measures, no one can be found who thinks the dissolution of the Convention a thing for a moment to be thought of.

Now, all this, it seems to me, involves a principle of great importance in the consideration of the question before us and one that is altogether too much overlooked. And I would like to ask those who do not regard with favor the re-introduction of Home Missions into the Convention, why united thought and action upon that question would be less advantageous to us than upon any that now occupies us? I think good reason can be shown why it would be even more so.

But Home Missions are necessarily more intimately connected with the general interests of the denomination than any other object we are engaged in. Promote this and you directly promote all, especially if done in the wisest and best way. I think this will be readily seen and admitted.

But here comes in another important consideration. There are serious evils in

the methods now employed for promoting Home Missionary work. Take, for instance, the case of New Brunswick. The Home Missionary Society meets alternately with the two Associations. Every other year therefore one Association is held before the Society's Annual meeting. Consequently, that one can have no voice whatever in Home Missionary business that year. But the same is really to an equal extent true of the one held after the Society meets. When action has been taken in one Association, of course the other has nothing to do but acquiesce. I speak of Associations because the meeting of the Society, is, as every one knows, only a meeting of the Association under another name and with another presiding officer. In order to obviate any difficulties that might arise it is always found necessary for the same men to attend both Associations and at least superintend this business. Now this is multiplying work at the expense of efficiency. And the same thing is, to a great extent, true in Nova Scotia, and will become more and more so. This year at the Home Mission Union in Halifax there were more than two and a half times as many present from the Central Association, as from the other three combined. From the Western, where we would suppose the most interest would be felt, there were but eight. From the Eastern, though the place was so accessible, but nine, and from Prince Edward Island only one. This almost tempts one to agree with Bro. Bares that for each Association to do its own Home Mission work would be preferable to the present arrangement. It certainly is not fair to one to have the Home Mission Anniversary take place at any other. And it is equally certain that the Denomination now in none of the three Provinces is fairly represented or really engaged in Home Mission arrangements. Comparative inefficiency must be the result, nor is it a matter of surprise that New Brunswick does not wish to connect herself with an organization conducted in that way. Extend the meetings of the Union to that Province and the evil would then be apparent indeed.

But my vocation is not fault-finding. If I point out a difficulty, I believe it devolves upon me to suggest a remedy. And it is a matter for rejoicing that for this which is already felt, and will be increasingly, there is one that is effectual. The Union I propose, can satisfactorily work out the problem of both Provinces—How shall we get an Annual Home Missionary meeting that will represent the body, or in which the body can be represented? The Convention only needs to be extended another day to make it just what is required. Those interested in Home Mission work and capable of considering it in all its bearings are there, or soon will be. And these are the very men needed in promoting Foreign Missions and Denominational Education. Indeed the three questions are inseparable. Try, as much as we may to keep them apart, they will, so to speak, instinctively and unconsciously coalesce. Especially is this true of Education and Missions—Home at least as much as Foreign. This is manifest in the Missionary labor performed during the College vacations, and it is not less so in Union Society efforts and the present method of supporting the Theological Professorship. Our Associations can never be confined to Home Missions, and the Convention must include them, at least in its Report on the State of the Denomination.

And now let it be understood that two things which have recently been somewhat discussed, do not touch this question, much less are they identical with it. In the first place embracing New Brunswick in the present Home Mission Union, or not doing so, has nothing whatever to do with it. Although it seems to be thought otherwise, New Brunswick or any other Province in the Convention may be unwilling for any such combination and yet strongly in favor of making Home Missions a prominent part of Convention work.

In the second place the matter of a single Board, located in any place, is just as far removed from the subject under consideration. It is not a question of one Board or many, large organizations or small ones. It is simply and only, Shall the united wisdom of our denomination be devoted to a consideration of this as one of the great objects worthy of our best thought? or shall it continue to be treated as so unimportant that we can afford to leave it in the hands of a few, and have our action respecting it worthy of the best confidence of none?

Our Associations were not intended for, neither are they, as at present arranged, adapted to the performance of the business