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## Poetry.

### The Organ Voice.

Under the artist's flying hands  
The white keys rise, the white keys fall;  
Now sudden sweet, now trumpet loud,  
Above the heads in silence bowed  
The brave chords fill the listening hall.

But if the touch be low and soft,  
Or if he strikes with flame and fire,  
Through all the changes deftly rung  
The soul of music finds a tongue  
To lift its message high and higher.

For major chord and minor note  
Not of themselves the tones prolong,  
But as the rent and broken seals,  
Through which the master's soul reveals  
His radiant thought embalmed in song.

Dear Lord! Thine instruments are we!  
Under thine hand we wait alone!  
And if thy touch bring loss or gain,  
And if it lead through joy or pain,  
With still small voice, or trumpet tone,

We may not care to ask or know,  
Nor heed if sad or glad it be,  
If in the end thy thought may roll  
Through every chord of heart and soul,  
And bear its harmony to thee!  
—*Rambling thoughts in Boston Journal.*

## Religious.

### Convention Sermon.

BY REV. J. W. MANNING OF HALIFAX.  
Preached before the Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, at Hillsborough, N. B., on the 22nd of August, 1880.

Published by request of the Convention.

Awake! Awake! put on thy strength  
O Zion.—Isa. 52:1.

The Jewish captives had seen many dark days during their long and wearisome exile. They had been made to feel the power of the oppressor's arm, and had writhed under it. With many a sigh for freedom the patriots waited for the hour of their deliverance. It is said that hope deferred maketh the heart sick, and if ever the saying has been proved true, it was in the case of the captives in Babylon. To these the declaration of the text, came like the opening of prison doors to those long bound.

They had been crying in the bitterness of their spirit, "Awake! awake! put on strength, O arm of the Lord," and now Jehovah by his prophet calls upon them to awake from their slumber—to shake off the lethargy by which the right hand of endeavor had been palsied—and to banish the gloom which had wrapped them in its murky folds—for the day of their redemption draweth nigh. This call of the prophet is not the echo of their cry to Jehovah for his delivering grace. It is not made as if in mockery of their woe.

He knew their case. He had been near, a silent though by no means an uninterested observer of all their grief. He had treasured up the tears which they had shed when they remembered Zion. "Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." But it is as if he had said, "You ask help of Me. My help is given to those who help themselves, make use of the strength which is already yours." "Put on thy strength O Zion." This is a principle of universal application—and I propose at this time to apply it to the Christian Church—by pointing out a few of the main elements of a church's strength.

As the New Testament idea of a Christian Church is that of a company of baptized believers joined together by covenant to keep the faith, to observe the ordinances of Christ, and to use the means which he has appointed for the good of their own souls, for the salvation of their fellow-men, and for the glory of God; it will be seen that no church can be considered strong unless it be composed of converted persons.

Piety is then an essential element of church strength. Piety is to the church what a keel is to a ship, what a backbone is to a man, what the soul is to the body. Piety is not a development of human nature, it has its beginning in the new birth. "If any man be in

Christ he is a new creature." The author of this change is the Holy Spirit. Regeneration or the new birth is grace in the germ—a Divine principle planted in the soul—like seed in the earth, so that there is "first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear." Piety is that grace growing, reaching forth to perfection. The new birth invariably results in a holy life, it not, it must be regarded as spurious, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." There is a specific purpose in the regeneration of every man, and that is a growing up into the likeness of his living head. The many references in the Scriptures to the churches indicate the same thing. A church is made up of "living stones," and "built up a spiritual house." Christians are said to be "living epistles," and to have the mind of Christ, and are declared to be "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." So also it is said of the Christians, "Ye are not of the world even as I am not of the world." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, and if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." These references and many others which might be given, plainly teach that there is a radical difference between the church and the world, and intimate that piety is not in harmony with a worldly spirit. This also is made still more plain by experience. The worldly spirit sustains the same relation to vital godliness that the weevil does to wheat, or rust to steel, or the dry rot in fruit.

I have read somewhere that the mosque of St. Sophia in Constantinople is always fragrant with the odor of musk, and has been so ever since it was rebuilt. More than a thousand years ago the mortar with which its solid walls were cemented, was charged with musk and the odor of it is there to day. Whether this be true or not, there is no doubt that Christ expected his churches to spread around them a fragrant piety, a silent yet powerful influence which should have such an effect upon men of the world as to lead them to say, "We will go with thee because we believed that God is with thee."

But is not this just where many churches fail? They stand high perhaps in the social scale. Their wealth and numbers command respect, or they have all the outward appliances; but the odor that surrounds them is bad—it repels.

The strength of a church is not in its confession, nor form nor gifts, nor any outward condition. There may be an elegant house of worship, an eloquent preacher in the pulpit, large and fashionable congregations, and music most artificially rendered, and yet no real strength. Such a body of people may gather from Sabbath to Sabbath and go through all the forms of Divine worship and spiritual life be utterly wanting. They may have the form to perfection and be altogether destitute of the power of godliness, and Christ may have to say of it as he did of the church in Sardis, "I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

The wealth of a nation is its men. The strength of a church is its piety. The truly good men in it give it power in a community, men who love the Lord Jesus Christ and live to spend and be spent for his glory and for the souls of men, are the strength and glory of a church.

The members of a church may be poor, and few as to numbers, and yet the character of that church be such that each one uniting with it is advanced in Christian truth and spiritual life. As we have seen, it is not quantity but quality that constitutes a strong church.

2. Knowledge.—Another element essential to the strength of a church is knowledge. There is a feeling, I know not how largely it obtains, that knowledge is a hinderance to piety, that all that is needed to make a good Christian or a good minister of the New Testament, is to be taught of the Holy Ghost. All will readily admit that no man can be a Christian unless he be first taught

of God; but as he increases in general knowledge, other things being equal, his usefulness will increase. There may be piety in the midst of abounding ignorance, but surely it does not grow most luxuriantly in such a soil. There is nothing in learning to quench piety. The two are not in conflict. What is food for one is not poison for the other, God in his word and God in his works are in perfect harmony. Science and religion, knowledge and piety have nothing to fear from each other. It is Godlike to know truth, it is brute like to remain in ignorance. Said the apostle "add to your faith virtue," i. e. strength, but add to both knowledge. It will not do to fall back comfortably into the arms of that oft repeated saying, "the truth—the truth it will prevail." For the fact is that the truth will prevail only when it can prevail intelligently. Because multitudes have forgotten to serve the Lord with the heart, it is not necessary that we should forget to serve him with the head. Because learning makes bad men more powerful for evil there is no sense in saying that we will keep our children in ignorance forever. The fact is as Dr. Bainbridge of Providence once said, "God has joined in eternal wedlock the most efficient piety and the most thorough culture, the most love and the greatest intelligence, the consecration of the heart and the consecration of the mind, and whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

Of all Christians in the world Baptists can least afford to remain in ignorance. Their principles forbid it—and their church polity as well. We have no pope or council, or synod or conference to make laws for our guidance or form courts of appeal to decide as to our faith or our practice. Every Baptist Church owes allegiance to one authority and to one only. Christ is lawgiver to his people, and Baptists claim his word to be the rule of their life. They receive not for commandments the traditions of men, but claim that the word of God tells them not only what they shall do but how it is to be done as well. There is one book therefore, with which Baptist churches should be very familiar. It is their order book, their chart. And yet there are tracts in this Book which are almost as much a terra incognita to the average Christian as the continent of Africa was to the average geographer, before the discoveries of Livingstone and Stanley. That surely is not very creditable to us as Christians. Some of us could stand a better examination in English history than we can in any one book of the Bible.

Brethren with this Book the liberties we enjoy to-day were obtained, and by this book we are to maintain them, so that its study should form an integral part of Church work. Perhaps if we have failed in anything as a denomination it has been by laying too much stress upon additions—in taking it for granted that when a soul is converted the work is done! We have not trained the converts that have been given us, and have cared too little of what became of them afterwards. "Like improvident shepherds our time is spent in driving up the lambs and marking them, and then turning them off into the wilderness to take care of themselves."

The strength of a church is not always seen by the number of baptisms it may chronicle from time to time! An army is effective—not because of the number of its recruits, as of the discipline of its battalions. It is just so with the Christian Church. Much of our strength is lost because there are so many in our churches whose knowledge of the Word of God is very imperfect, and who appear to be contented with their condition. They remain feeble and sickly all their life-long—a care and a burden rather than an element of power and efficiency.

But as Baptists we need especially to be rooted and grounded in the faith of the Gospel. There is much truth which we hold in common with Christians of other names. There is also an important part of the teaching of our Saviour

and His Apostles which other denominations do not receive, but which God has enabled us to perceive and accept. Shall we bring prominently before our people those truths wherein we are all agreed and keep in abeyance, or speak with bated breath, of those that distinguish us from others? Or shall we present the whole truth as we understand it, and leave the results with Him who has said that His "word shall not return unto Him void, but shall accomplish that which He pleases and prosper in the thing whereunto He has sent it?"

We hold that the ordinances of the Christian Church are to be administered only to intelligent and believing recipients—for we are convinced that Christ has so commanded. We believe that all his commands are binding, and that we have no right to say, "This we will do and that we will leave undone or change the manner of doing it." We have no choice in the matter. Here we stand! we can do no otherwise. This is not sectarianism, nor bigotry. It is loyalty to conviction. It is fidelity to Christ and such fidelity as will one day wear the crown and bear the joyous welcome—"Well done!" To rescue the perishing and lift up the fallen—we will go as far with our brethren of other names as they choose. We will stand by their side—or march shoulder to shoulder against the common foes. Nay we will lead the van or cover a retreat if necessary. But we must carry our own banner into the conflict! We will not suffer it to be furled nor trailed in the dust. As long as strength is given, its folds shall flutter in the breeze.

We make no apology for our denominational distinctions, we have none to make! We did not institute the ordinances which separate us from other Christians—nor set up any barrier to keep them away from us. We have simply learned to obey God rather than man, to keep the commands of Christ in preference to the traditions of men. The separation is no fault of ours. We have taken the air line of obedience to Christ and the schism can only be healed when the Universal Church shall come back from her wandering—and write upon her banners the old inscription—"One Lord! one faith! one baptism!"

3. The next element of church strength to which I shall call your attention is systematic beneficence.

No fact is more self-evident than this, that Christian stewardship is not understood by the great body of believers. We open our Bibles and read, "Ye are not your own for ye are bought with a price," but how few of us have entered into the spirit of these words. Many are ready to admit that in spiritual things they are subject to Christ,—that their souls belong to Him but when it comes to their time or their talents, and especially to their money they say, "No I thank you."

And yet if there be one duty above another which the Lord Jesus has enjoined and made a necessity for discipleship—it is the duty of giving up one's self and one's possessions to His service. When the young ruler came to Jesus to inquire as to the way of salvation, and said that he had kept the moral law from his very youth, Jesus quietly asked him if he would part with all his worldly possessions and take Him as his portion for this life as well as for the next. From this simple request he drew back—and "went away sorrowful;" and yet without a willingness to do just that at the call of Jesus, neither this young man nor any other could be saved. Selling one's goods or giving to the poor has no merit in itself nor helps to secure salvation of the soul. But one is to hold himself ready to sell all that he has or do with it just as the Saviour may direct. And so Jesus said, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple." As one has said, "He who does not propose to be Christ's in all things, cannot be Christ's in anything. One may be an imperfect Christian, but he cannot be partly a Christian. He cannot be a Christian

in spiritual things, if he is not a Christian in all things."

If these things are so, then, a man who should present himself to the church as a candidate for baptism and church membership, and, who should refuse to lay his property on the altar of Christian consecration, should be rejected by the church as not meeting the Divine requirement—and any professing Christian who should persistently refuse to give of his means and to give liberally for the spread of the Gospel should question the genuineness of his conversion.

You remember when Mary wanted to express the gratitude she felt for her Lord, she did not content herself with merely bowing at His feet, but brought forth her alabaster box of ointment and poured it upon those feet until the house was filled with its fragrance. She brought the most precious thing she had to show her adoring love. True worship will always seek to show itself in sacrifice. It was so in Old Testament times. David said, "I will not offer unto the Lord my God of that which shall cost me nothing." Few of us know what sacrifice means, because we have never felt called upon to make any. Men speak of their love to Christ—their interest in all those things which pertain to the welfare of Zion. They meet together to pray that the Lord will revive His work—that He will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and that He will give to His Son "the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession," who think they have done nobly when they have given five dollars a year for the various benevolent objects of the denomination. Nobly! Why there are men who have given their lives—their all to this work! What are our petty contributions compared with what Carey and Judson and Boardman and a host of others gave! With what some men and women now living, are giving! What is it in the light of that cross where the Son of God gave Himself so freely for our redemption. Who can reckon the value of Christ's blood in dollars and cents? The riches are His! Shall we keep the best for ourselves and offer Him the refuse? Shall we not rather say, "Here Lord, take us and all we have: for Thine they are, and Thou art worthy."

The measure of the duty of each is, according as the Lord hath prospered Him.

I have said that systematic beneficence is an element of church strength. By the term beneficence is meant the feeling we may have for others by which we are willing to give of our substance to help them, and systematic beneficence is simply beneficence reduced to system. At first view this may not appear a matter of much importance, since the great thing is to get men to give of their means—but it is not a matter of indifference, and for two reasons a healthy Christian growth requires it—and that the interest in church work may be kept at the same temperature. It is bad to have spasms about anything. We are not indifferent when or how we take our meals, for we know that good health requires us to have good food at regular intervals of time. The same law obtains in respect to spiritual health. Give regularly and often, other things being equal, and your soul will be fat and flourishing.

It is said of Indians that they often eat enough at one meal to last them a week; but no civilized Christian wants to live after that fashion. Men may give to the different denominational objects all they intend to at one time, but sure am I that it would be better for them and all concerned if they were to give liberally often. In this way their interest in the work of the church would be sustained all the year round—a result that cannot be over-estimated. It might be advantageous from a merely commercial point of view for a man to do his praying for a year all up during a slack time, but it would not be Christian and the same may be said of giving, since giving forms a part of true worship as well as praying. The