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## Poetry.

I could not do without Thee.

I could not do without Thee,  
O Saviour of the lost!  
Whose precious blood redeemed me,  
At such tremendous cost.  
Thy righteousness, Thy pardon,  
Thy precious blood must be  
My only hope and comfort,  
My glory and my plea!

I could not do without Thee!  
I cannot stand alone,  
I have no strength or goodness,  
No wisdom of my own.  
But thou, beloved Saviour,  
Art all in all to me;  
And weakness will be power,  
If leaning hard on Thee.

I could not do without Thee!  
For oh! the way is long,  
And I am often weary,  
And sigh replaces song.  
How could I do without Thee?  
I do not know the way;  
Thou knowest and Thou leadest,  
And wilt not let me stray.

I could not do without Thee!  
For years are fleeting fast,  
And soon in solemn loneliness,  
The river must be passed.  
But Thou wilt never leave,  
And, though the waves roll high,  
I know Thou wilt be near me,  
And whisper, "It is I."

F. R. HAVERGAL.

## Select Sermon.

Zion's Message and Zion's Work.

BY REV. ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D. D.

PREACHED BEFORE THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ENGLISH BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY, IN BLOOMSBURY CHAPEL, LONDON, ON WEDNESDAY, THE 5TH OF MAY, 1880.

"O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain: O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid: say unto the cities of Judah, Behold, your God!"—Isaiah xl. 9.

There is something very grand in these august and mysterious voices which call one to another in the opening verses of this chapter. First, the purged ear of the prophet hears the Divine command to him and to his brethren—Comfort Jerusalem with the message of the God who comes for her deliverance. Then afar off another voice is heard, the herald and forerunner of the approaching Deity; and when thus the foundation has been laid, yet another takes up the speech, and "The voice said cry," and the anonymous recipient of the command asks with what message he shall be entrusted, and the answer is the signature and pledge of the Divine fulfilment of the word thus spoken. And then there comes, as I take it, a pause of silence, within which, the great Epiphany and manifestation takes place, and the coming God hath come, entered into the rebuilt city, and there shines in His beauty; and then breaks forth the rapturous commandment of my text to the resuscitated city, to tell all her daughters of Judah the glad tidings of a present God.

I need not, I suppose, spend your time in vindicating the translation of our Bible as against one which has been made very familiar to many of us by being wedded to Handel's music, and has commended itself to many, according to which Zion is rather the recipient than the herald of the tidings, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength," and so on. Beautiful as that may be, it is still I think, less appropriate than the rendering adopted in our version, for this reason, if for no other, that the word rendered "that bringest good tidings" is a feminine form, and is most naturally referred to the personified city, the sad and desolate widow, the true Niobe of nations, who is now called upon, rebuilt and restored, to ring out the glad tidings. And I suppose I need not either spend any time in vindicating our transference to the Gentile Church, beyond the simple remark that, whatever be the date of this second portion of Isaiah's prophecy,

its standpoint is the time of the Captivity, when Jerusalem lay desolate, burned with fire, and all their pleasant things were laid waste, so that the city here addressed is the new form of the ancient Zion, which had risen from her ashes, and had better tidings of glad significance to impart to all the nations. And so, dear brethren, looking at the words from that point of view, I think that they may very fairly yield to us two or three very old-fashioned and well-worn thoughts, which may yet be stimulating and encouraging to us with regard to the special object which brings us together this morning; and I take them as simply as possible, just as they run here in this text, which brings out very strikingly and beautifully, first of all, the function of the Evangelist Zion; secondly, the manner of her message; and lastly, its contents.

I. And so, first of all, I ask you to look with me for a moment or two at the thoughts that cluster round the name, "O Zion, that bringest glad tidings." It is almost a definition of the Church; at any rate, it is a description of her by her most characteristic office and function, that which marks and separates her from all associations and society of men. This is her highest office: this is the reason of her being; this is her noblest dignity. All mystical powers have been claimed for her. Men have been bidden to submit their judgement and manhood to her authority; but her true dignity is that she bears a Gospel in her hand, and grace is poured into her lips. Fond and sense-bound regrets have been sighed forth that her miracle-working gifts have faded away; but so long as her voice can quicken dead souls, and make the tongue of the dumb to speak, her noblest energies remain unimpaired, and so we may think of her as thus most exalted and dignified that her Master addresses her, "O Zion, that bringest good tidings."

Now, if I were right in my preliminary remark, to the effect that, prior to my text, we are to suppose the manifestation and approach of the Divine Deliverer, then I think it is quite clear that what constitutes Zion the messenger of good tidings is the presence in her of the living God. Well now, you translate that into New Testament language, and it just comes to this: that what constitutes the church the evangelist for the world is the simple possession of Christ or of the Gospel, and that breaks out into two or three points on which I want to dwell for a moment or two.

The first of them is this: whoever has Christ has the power to impart Him. You are all preachers, or meant to be, by virtue of the possession of that Divine Christ for your own. We Non-conformists, who are supposed to belong to the left wing of the advanced party, especially we Baptists, are all ready enough to proclaim the universal priesthood of all believers when we are lifting it up against ecclesiastical assumption; we are ready to take it for the law of our own lives, and to say, "Yes, priests by the imposition of a mightier hand, and ministers of Christ by the possession of Christ, and therefore bound and able to impart Him to all around. He has given us His love, and He thereby has made us fit to impart Him. Zion only needed to receive its God in order thereby to possess the power to say unto all the cities of Judah, 'Behold, your God.'" It does not take much genius, it does not take much culture, it does not need any prolonged training for a man that has Christ to say, "Behold, I have Him," and the very first Christian sermon that was ever preached was a very short one, and a very effectual one, for it converted the whole congregation, and it was this: "We have found the Messiah." That was all—the utterance of individual possession and personal experience, and it "brought him to Jesus."

Well, then, take another point. The possession of Christ for yourselves imposes upon you the obligation to impart Him. All property in this world is trust property, and everything that a man knows that can help or bless the

moral or spiritual age or intellectual condition of his fellows, he is thereby under solemn obligation all round to impart. And, if that is true all round, it is eminently and specially true here—that there is an obligation arising from the bands that knit us to one another, so that no man can possess his good alone without being untrue to what we call nowadays the solidarity of humanity—an obligation imposed upon us by the very nature of the position. You have got, you say, the bread of life; very well, what would you think of a man in a famine who, when women were boiling their children, and men were fighting with the swine on the dunghill for garbage, was content to eat his morsel alone, and leave them to perish as they might? You have got, you say, the remedy, healing for all the diseases of humanity. Very well, what would you think of a man who, in a pestilence, was contented with swallowing his own specific, and leaving others to die and to rot in the air? You have got the Christ, and you have got Him that you may impart Him. "He that withholdeth bread, the people shall curse him;" of how much deeper malediction from despairing lips will they be thought worthy who call themselves the followers of Him that gave His life to be the bread of the world, and withhold it from famishing souls?

And it is an obligation that arises, too, from the very purposes of your calling. What are you Christian men and women saved for? For your own blessedness? Yes, and no. No creature in God's great universe but is great enough to be a worthy end of the Divine action; the happiness of the humblest and most insignificant moves His mighty hand. Ay, but no creature in God's universe so great as that he is a worthy end of the Divine action, if he is going to keep all the Divine gifts in himself. We are all brought into the light that we may impart light.

Heaven doth with us as we with torches do;  
Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues  
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike  
As if we had them not. Spirits are not  
finely touch'd  
But to fine issues.

II. And now turn with me for a little while to the second thought, which I desire to draw from these words. We have here, in a very picturesque and vivid form, the setting forth of the manner in which the Evangelist Zion is to proclaim her message. The fair-featured herald is bidden to get up into the high mountain, perhaps a mere picturesque detail, perhaps some reference to the local position of the city set upon a hill, like the priests of Ebal or Gerizim, or Alpine shepherds, calling to each other across the valleys, to secure some vantage ground; and, next, to let her voice roll out across the glen. No faltering whisper will do, but a voice that compels audience, that can be heard above the tumult and afar off, and confident and loud and clear, because courageous and without dread. "Lift up thy voice with strength." Yes, but a timid heart will make a tremulous voice, and fear and doubt will whisper when courage will ring it out. So "be not afraid;" there is the foundation of the clearness and the loudness with which the word is to be uttered.

And so that just opens itself out into these two thoughts, on each of which I say a word or two. Our message is to be given with a courage and a force that are worthy of it. "Be not afraid." That is a lesson for this day, my brethren. There are plenty of causes of fear round about us if, like poor Peter on the water, we look at the waves instead of at the Master. There are the great forces of evil that are always arrayed. There is the thoroughgoing and formidable rejection of all that is dearest to us, which is creeping like poison through cultivated society at home; there is the manifest disproportion between our resources and the task that we have set ourselves to. "They need not depart; give ye them to eat," said the Master. What! five thousand people need not depart, and only this scanty provision of loaves and fishes!

Yes; the Master's hand can multiply it. There is the consciousness of our own weakness; there is the apparent slow progress of the cause which we are pleading here to-day. All these things come surging in upon us when our spirits are low and our faith weak; and yet the message comes to us, "Be not afraid." May I venture to break that up into two or three exhortations, which I cast into the shape of exhortations, not from any assumption of superiority, but for the sake of point and force.

First of all, I would say, let us cherish a firm, soul-absorbing confidence in the power and truth of the message we have to carry. I do not speak now of the intellectual discipline which may be required from each of us to meet the difficulties of this day—that is outside of my present subject; but there is a moral discipline quite as important as the intellectual. There cannot be any question, I suppose, to anybody who looks round about, and notices the tendencies of his own mind, but that all we Christian people, in our various circles and organizations, are under a very great temptation to a very perceptible lowering of the key in the presence of the widespread doubt—the temptation to fancy that a thing is less certain because it is denied; that because "A" has attacked this thing, and "B's" clever book has unsettled that thing, and "C's" researches seem to cast a great deal of doubt upon that other thing, that therefore we are to surrender them all, and talk about them as if they were doubtful problems or hypotheses rather than certain verities of our faith. And there are some of us, I venture to say, who are in danger of another temptation, and that is getting a little bit ashamed and afraid to say, "Yes, I stand by that great truth, God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself," for fear of being thought to be, well—"narrow," is the favourite word—"old-fashioned," or "holders of a creed outworn," "in antagonism with the spirit of the age," and so on, and so on. Brethren, I am not the man, I hope, to preach an unreasonable attitude of antagonism; I am not the man to ask anybody to exaggerate his beliefs because somebody else denies them, but I do believe that amongst us all, and especially among you young men, and to a large extent in our ministry, too, as elsewhere, there is the temptation just to be a little bit afraid, and not to let the voice ring out with that clear certitude which becomes the messenger of the Cross. Try by mental discipline to find the intellectual standing ground that is firm below your feet, and then remember that is not all, but moral discipline is wanted also—that I may open my mouth boldly, as I ought to speak.

And then, if I might venture to dwell for a moment or two further upon this class of consideration, I would say, Do not let us make too much of the enemy. There is no need why we should take them at their own appraisal. We are always tempted to think that no generation ever had such a fight as the present generation. They have said that, ever since there was a Christian Church. But the true, healthy way of looking at the adversary—and by that I mean all the various forms of difficulty which beset us in our evangelistic work, difficulties in the mission-field at home, difficulties in the state of things here round about us—the true, healthy way of looking at them all, is to look at them as the brave Apostle Paul did, when he said, "I am going to stop at Ephesus till Pentecost, for there is a great and effectual door opened to me." And how did he know that? He tells you in the next clause, "There are many adversaries." Where there are many adversaries, there is an effectual door, if you and I are bold and big enough to go in and occupy.

And then I would venture to say, still further, let us remember the victories of the past. Let us make personal experience of the overcoming powers that are stored and hidden in Christ's Gospel. And above all, let us remember who fights with us. Jesus

Christ and one man are always the majority. There is an old story, some of you remember, about the Conqueror of Rome, who dashed his sword down into the scales when the ransom was being weighed; and Christ flings His sharp sword with the two edges into the scales when we are weighing resources, and the other kicks the beam. Oh, enemies, plenty of them, all round about. Yes, and the spreading forth of His wings fills the breadth of the land. Be it so. But for all the irruption of the barbarous and cruel hosts, it is Thy band, O Emanuel! And in His time He will sweep them before His presence as the north wind drives the locusts into the hindmost sea. I do not know if any of you remember an ancient Christian legend, and I do not know whether it is a legend or a truth—it does not matter, it will serve for our purpose all the same either way—when the Emperor Julian, surnamed the Apostate, once taunted a humble Christian man with the question, "What is the carpenter's son doing now?" and the answer was, "Hewing wood for the Emperor's funeral pile," and not very long after there came the fatal field on which, according to ancient tradition, he died with the words on his lips, "Thou hast conquered, Galilean." As in Mr. Carlyle's grand translation of Luther's Hymn of the Reformation—

Of our own strength we nothing can,  
Full soon were we down-ridden;  
But for us fights the proper Man,  
Whom God Himself hath bidden,  
Ask ye, who is the same?  
Christ Jesus is His name,  
The Lord Sabaoth's Son.

He and none other shall conquer in this battle. "Lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid."

III. And so now I come to the last point that emerges from these words, looked at as I am doing this morning; and that is the substance and contents of the Evangelist Zion's message, "Say unto the cities of Judah, behold your God!" They were to be pointed to a great historical act, in which God had manifested and made Himself visible to men; and the words of my text are, not only an exclamation, but they are an entreaty, and the message was to be given to these little daughter cities of Judah as representing all of those for whom the deliverance has been wrought—all things which are paralleled, if one had time to work them out, in the message that is committed to our hand.

For, first of all, we all have given to us the charge of pointing men, to the great historical fact wherein God is visible to men, "Behold, your God!" You cannot reveal God by word, you cannot reveal God by thought. There is no way open to Him to make Himself known to his creatures except the way by which men make themselves known to one another; that is by their deeds; and so high above all speculation, high above all abstraction, nearer to us than all thought, stands the historical fact in which God shows Himself to the world, and that is in the person of Jesus Christ, "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person," in whom the abysses of the Divine nature are opened, and through whom all the certitude of light that human eye can receive pours itself in genial and yet Divine radiance upon the world. How beautiful in that connection the verses following my text are I need only indicate in a phrase as I pass along, "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand," and yet behold, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." And so in that Christ is the power of God, for I take it that He is the arm of the Lord; in that Christ is the power of God, and in that Christ is the gentleness of God; and whilst men grope in the darkness, our business is to point to the living, dying Son, and to say, "There you have the whole, the perfect relation of the unseen God."

And do not let us forget that the burning centre of all that brightness is the Cross, that ever-wonderous paradox; that the depth of humiliation is the height of glory; that Christ's Cross is the throne of the manifested Divine power quite as much as it is