

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. VII. No. 24.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 1862.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXVI. No. 24.

Select Sermon.

By the kindness of a friend we are enabled to place before our readers the substance of the Sermon preached by Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, on the Lord's day after the opening of the Great Exhibition in London, in which he makes use of that event to call attention to

Another and a Nobler Exhibition.

A Sermon delivered May 4th, 1862, by REV. C. H. SPURGEON, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."—Ephesians iii. 10.

ALL the world has been talking during the last three days of the splendid pageant which adorned the opening of the International Exhibition. Crowds have congregated in the palace of universal art; representatives of all the nations of the earth have journeyed for many a league to view its wonders; eminent personages of all empires have appeared in the gorgeous spectacle, and such a scene has glittered before the eyes of all men, as have never before in all respects been equalled, and may not for many a year find a successor to rival it. Wherefore all these gatherings? Why muster ye, all ye nations? Wherefore come ye hither, ye gazing sons of men? Surely your answer must be, that ye have come together that ye may see the manifold wisdom of MAN. As they walk along the aisles of the great Exhibition, what see they but the skill of man, first in this department, and then in the other—at one moment in the magnificent, at the next in the minute—at one instant in a work of elegance in ornament, in the next in a work of skill and usefulness: "manifold wisdom," the works and productions of many minds, the different hues and colours of thought, embodied in the various machines, and statues, and so forth, which human skill has been able to produce. We grant you that God has been most rightly recognized there, both in the solemn prayer of the Archbishop, and in the hymn of the Laureate; but still the great object, after all, was to behold the manifold wisdom of man, and had they taken away man's skill and man's art, what would there have been left? Brethren, may the greatest results follow from this gathering! We must not expect that it, or anything else short of the gospel, will ever bring about the universal reign of peace; we must never look to art and science to accomplish that triumph which is reserved for the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet may it spread the feelings of benevolence—may it bind together the scattered children of Adam—may it fuse into a happy and blessed union the kindreds of men that were scattered abroad at Babel, and may it prepare the way, and open the gates, that the gospel may proceed to the uttermost ends of the earth!

It is, however, very far from my mind to direct your attention to the marvels which crowd the area of the huge temple of 1862. I invite you, rather, to follow me to a nobler exhibition than this, where crowds are gathering—not of mortals, but of immortal spirits. The temple is not of art and science, but of grace and goodness, built with living stones, cemented with the fair colours of atoning blood, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone"—that temple, the Church of the living God, "the pillar and ground of the truth." Into this great palace crowd ten thousand times ten thousand of the host of God, "cherubim and seraphim," or by whatsoever other names those bright intelligences may be known among themselves—"principalities and powers," the different degrees in the hierarchy of immortal spirits, if such there be—these are all represented as intently gazing upon the wondrous fabric which God has reared. Along the aisles of that Church, along the ages of its dispensations, stand the various trophies of divine grace and love—the jewel cases of virtues and graces which adorn the believer, the mementoes of triumphs gotten over sin and hardness of heart, and of victories achieved over temptation and trial; and as the spirits walk along these corridors full of

divine workmanship, they stand, they gaze, they admire, and wonder, and speed back their way to heaven, and sing more loudly than before, hallelujah to the God whose manifold wisdom they have beheld in the Church of God below.

Beloved friends, our text is a strange one. If you will reflect that the angels, the elder-born of creatures which compared with us, have been with God for many an age; and yet I do not know that it is ever said that by anything else they ever learned "the manifold wisdom of God." They were with him when he made the earth and the heavens; perhaps during those long periods when the earth was a-forming—"In the beginning," when "God created the heavens and the earth," the angels were wont to visit this world, and to behold alive and in their glory those strange shapes of mystery which now we dig up in fossil from the earth. Certainly in that day when "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face thereof," the angels knew the hidden treasure; and when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light," when that first ray of light seemed like a living finger to touch the earth and waken it to beauty, then seraphic fingers swept their heavenly harps, and "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." Yet I do not learn, though they were with the Great Worker during the seven days of creation, though they saw "the cattle after their kind, and the fowls of the air after their kind," and the fish of the sea, and all the plants and herbs, yet I see not that in all this there was made known unto them "the manifold wisdom of God." Nay, more, when man, the Master's last work, walked through Eden,—when, with his fair consort by his side, he stood up to praise the Maker, though he was "fearfully and wonderfully made," though in his mind and body there was a display of wisdom unrivalled before,—yet I do not learn that even in man, as a creature, there was made known "the manifold wisdom of God." Yes, and more than this; when other worlds were made, when the stars were kindled like glowing flames by light of Deity, if there be other peoples, and other kindreds, and other tribes in those myriads of far-off lands, I do not find in the creation of all those hosts of worlds which bestud the wide fields of ether, that there was then made known to celestial spirits "the manifold wisdom of God." Nay, more, in all the dispensations of divine Providence apart from the Church, in all the mystic revolutions of those wondrous wheels that are full of eyes, apart from the Church, there has not been made known to these beings to the fullest extent the wisdom of God. Ah! and, brethren, remember yet once more, that they with undimmed eye look upon the glory of him that sits upon the throne, so far as it can be seen by created vision; they behold the beatific vision; they are glistening in the splendours of Deity, and veil their faces when at his footstool they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;" and yet, though standing, as it were, in the sun, though they are foremost of all the creatures, nearest to the eternal throne, I do not read that by all this they have in the highest sense learned "the manifold wisdom of God."

What an idea, then, does this give us of the importance of the Church! Brethren, never let us despise any more the meanest member of it, since there is more to be beheld in the Church than in creation in its utmost breadth; more of the wisdom of God in the saving of souls than in the building the arches of the sky; nay, more of God to be seen that even heaven with all its splendours can otherwise reveal. Oh! let us open our eyes that we lose not those divine mysteries which angels desire to look into!

I have now already explained the meaning of the text; we have, therefore, but to direct your attention to those points of interest upon which angelic intelligence would be sure to linger; and we shall pray that, while we mention these in brief and running catalogue, our hearts may be led to meditate much upon the manifold, the varied wisdom of God displayed in the Church which Christ has bought with his blood.

I. And first, dear brethren, we think that the first object of attention in the Church to the principalities and powers, is the SCHEME AND PLAN OF SAVING THE CHURCH. It is this

that they so much admire and wonder at. It has been exceedingly well said by others, that if a Parliament had been held of all the spirits in heaven and in earth, and if it had been committed to this general assembly to ordain and fix upon a plan whereby God might be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly, they must all have failed to achieve the task. Those lofty minds, doubtless, consider with delight the fact that in God's way of saving his Church, all his attributes shine out with undiminished lustre. God is just; they know it in heaven, for they saw Lucifer fall like lightning when God cast him out of his dwelling-place on account of sin. God is just; and as much so upon Calvary, where his Son hangs and bleeds "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," as he was when he cast down the son of the morning. The angels see in his salvation this great wonder of justice and peace embracing each other—God as sternly just as if there were not a particle of mercy in his being, smiting his Son for the sin of his people with all the force of his might—God, yet as merciful as if he were not just, embracing his people as though they had never sinned, and loving them with a love which could not have been greater had they never transgressed. They understand how God so hated sin that he laid vengeance on his only begotten, and yet "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." As in the crowns of Oriental princes the most precious jewels shone in clusters, so as in one wonderful corona all the infinite attributes of God shine out at once in all their combined glory around thy cross, O Jesus, earth's wonder and heaven's prodigy! This difficulty, so delightfully met, so completely disposed of by the atonement of Christ, causes the angels to behold "the manifold wisdom of God."

But, further, when the angels see that by this great plan all the ruin that sin brought upon mankind is removed, they again wonder at the wisdom of God! and when they especially notice the way in which it was removed, the strange and mysterious methods which God used for rolling away the stone from the door of the human sepulchre, they yet more bow down with awe. Did we lose Eden in Adam? Lo, the Lord Jesus Christ has given us a better than Paradise! Did we lose the dignity of manhood? Lo, to-day we regain it in Christ; "for thou hast put all things under his feet." Did we lose spotless purity? Again we have obtained it in Christ; for we are justified through his righteousness and washed in his blood. Did we lose communion with God? We have obtained it this day; for "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Did we lose heaven itself? Ah! heaven is ours again; for in him we have obtained inheritance, and are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." And all this mischief is made to destroy itself, God overruling it, to be its own destruction; the dragon stung with his own sting; Goliath killed with his own sword; Death is slain by the death of the man who was crucified; sin is put away by the great sin-offering, who "bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" the grave is plagued by its own victim when Christ lay a captive within it. Satan casteth out Satan in this case. We rise by man as by man we fell: "As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive." The worm in whom Satan triumphed, is the worm in whom God is glorified. It was man whom Satan sought to make the instrument of divine dishonour, and it is man in whom God triumphs over all the crafts and cruelties of hell. This the angels wonder at, for they see in this scheme of salvation, meeting as it does every mischief, and meeting it on its own ground, "the manifold wisdom of God."

Observe, also, that through the great scheme of salvation by the atonement, God is more glorified than he would have been if there had been no fall, and consequently no room for a redemption. The angels admire "the manifold wisdom of God" in the whole story of the human race, seeing that in the whole of it, from the beginning to the end, God is more glorified than he would have been had it all been written in letters of gold, without one sin or one suffering on the part of the human race.

II. Secondly, without a doubt the wisdom of God is made known to angels and principalities in the various dispensations through which the Church has passed. At first the Church was indeed a little flock, a few chosen out of the mass—Abram, the Syrian, ready to perish, and a few godly ones in his household. Then the stream widened a little, and there became twelve tribes; and soon the dispensation became more clear; Moses was raised up, and Aaron, whom God had chosen. Then the angels desired to look into the typical rites and ceremonies of that ancient dispensation. They were pictured standing on the mercy seat, with wings outstretched, with their faces bent downwards as if they would fain behold the secret which the golden lid concealed. Doubtless, as they saw the sacrifice, whether it was the burnt-offering, the peace-offering, or the sin-offering—as they saw the gorgeous ceremonies of the tabernacle, or the yet more splendid rites of the temple, they admire the wisdom of God; as it was set forth in the dim symbol and shadow, how much more must they have admired it, when the Sun of righteousness arose with healing beneath his wings, when they saw the sacrifice superseded by the one great offering, the high priest set aside by the man, who having once offered one sacrifice, for ever sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; how they have marvelled since that time as truth after truth has been expounded in the experience of believers, as doctrine after doctrine has been revealed to the Church of Christ by the illuminations of the Holy Spirit.

Both in the dispensations, as well as in the plan, there is made known to principalities and powers "the manifold wisdom of God."

III. Thirdly, to be brief upon each point, we may conclude, without any doubt, that they mainly see the wisdom of God in his Church, in the Church's COVENANT HEAD AND REPRESENTATIVE. Oh! when first they heard that the Lord of life and glory was to be made flesh and to dwell among us, how they must have admired the plan of heaven's going down to earth that earth might come up to heaven! The babe in the manger commanded all their songs. When they saw that babe become a man, and heard him preach, how they must have marvelled at the wisdom of sending God himself to be God's own prophet! When they saw that man living a life of perfect holiness, how they must have clapped their wings at the thought that man could see perfection now in God's own self, shrouded in human form! But when it came to atonement, and they learned that God's people must be crucified in Christ, how struck must they have been, as the thought burst upon them for the first time, that the whole host of the elect were to sweat great drops of blood through one man,—that they were to be flagellated, to be scourged, bruised, and spat upon, in one man,—that the host of the chosen were to carry the cross of their condemnation upon one man's shoulders,—that that one man was for them all, to take all their load of guilt, and, nailed to the tree, bleed away his life for the whole body. Oh! I say, when they saw that lowly man, with all the sins of the whole chosen company resting upon his shoulders, and knew this solitary man was God—able to carry the whole—they must have marvelled, indeed, at the wisdom of God. And when that triumphant man cried, "It is finished!" having drained the cup of damnation to its utmost dregs, till there remained not one black drop for another of the elect to drink, when that one man descended into the grave, and the whole company of the faithful were buried with him, oh, how they marvelled! When again they beheld the second Adam bursting his restraints, rending the chains of death as though, like another Samson, he had broken the green withes of the Philistines, as though they were but tow, how astonished they were when they thought that the elect were risen in that glorified person.

"The manifold wisdom of God" in thus constituting Christ the covenant head and representative of the elect in all its various shapes and shades, must have been discovered to angelic beings.

(Continued on page 189.)

Reader, do you close up each day so as to be ready for death?