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Poetry.

THE FIRST SUNRISE.

There was no sun, but there was light,
The bonds of darkness rending;
There was no earth, but shores of night
With seas of day were blending;
And o'er the world, without a sound,
In grand, eternal silence bound,
The dim-lit flood extending.

God spake the word—up rose the earth,
The waters round it clinging;
And with glad wonder at its birth
The highest heavens were ringing;
Through all the world a sound went out,
The sons of God for joy did shout,
The morning stars were singing.

There fell a silence from on high,
And hush'd the wondrous story;
God spake; and sunrise drenched the sky,
And smote the mountains hoary.
Then burst from heaven a mighty song;
The sons of God, so bright and strong,
Gave unto Him the glory!

Religious.

THE DIVINE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN WORK.

BY DR. CULROSS.

Read at the late session of the English Baptist Union.

It is not a thing to be debated, but to be assumed as beyond question among us, that we are to resemble and represent Jesus Christ, that we are to be, in a sense, His "gospels" to our generation; that in us He is still to live among men. Now this is the account of Him as He appeared in the world—that, being anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, He "went about doing good." Very evidently, to resemble Him, we must take our part in doing good—not merely dreaming about it, but doing it. Without this no Christian life, however rich in other elements, is Christlike—as no Christian enjoyment has its true and perfect zest.

One of the most tragically sad spectacles we can look upon is that of a band of professing Christians quietly and as with good conscience living to themselves. It adds a strange element of horror if they justify their inaction by some theological dogma which they call a "doctrine of grace." Almost as sad a spectacle is that of a band of professing Christians who see the ungodliness existing round about them and who shift the whole duty of dealing with it upon a substitute, whom they pay to use influence for them, and from whom they demand a periodical report, that they may see what has been got for their money—themselves the while not moving the burden with one of their fingers. But this is not being Christlike. He did not send down, but came down into the very deep of our misery, to seek and to save that which was lost. With my whole heart I honour our home missionaries, but they cannot do our work. You Christian men and women must yourselves be the missionary to your neighbourhood, going in as the Lord leads you, and doing what He enables you to do, in simplicity and godly sincerity. Not to speak of Christ ruling throughout every region of your personal life, you must carry in His gospel, as a message that has proved itself in your own heart, to sick-beds, into social gatherings, into quiet talks with friends into casual conversations with strangers just as opportunity arises. I desire to lay the utmost stress and emphasis on this—that no money-payment can stand in the stead of personal influence, where personal influence is open to us; that all Christian men and women must take their providentially assigned part, whatever that may be, in the work of Christ—each one, according to the measure and quality of the gift of Christ, a witness for Him in his own sphere, and among the members of his own class—a living tool in the hand of a living workman that, within limits, can know the workman's will and fall in with it.

I am not going to judge the churches. I shudder at the self-complacent tone in which accusers of the brethren pronounce them all "dead." If any man has a Divine call to do that, let him set about it solemnly, as bearing a burden from the Lord—one of the most awful and heart-crushing that a man can bear. Whatever be the evils existing among us, I believe that more Christian work is being done to-day than at any past time—more, at least, of the kind that can be "reported." Every now and again some biography appears which tells of simple consecration to the Divine will, albeit in some lowly sphere, and which, after every abatement, makes it grandly evident that the Gospel, living in Christian hearts, is as mighty to-day as in the first age. We all know individuals also, or know of them, who seek no human reward or applause, or even notice—as they dread no blame—and who are more potential on the side of good and against evil than our rulers, by virtue of the truthfulness, simplicity, and force of their Christian character, and as the inevitable outcome of a life that is hid with Christ in God. But still when all this has been said to the full, frankly and heartily, a sorrowful complaint rises from all sides, that Christian men and women in general are so indifferent, and apparently untouched by the world's mighty woe; that so many scarcely recognise any personal responsibility; that the desire to draw in wealth and respectability into churches is so much greater than the desire to save souls; that there is such a curse of mechanicalness among us, and religious custom, and so little known of an anointing with the Holy Spirit and with power. And I am sure we must all have passed acts of condemnation upon ourselves for our cruel negligence and selfishness.

Even of the work we do, not a little is barren of spiritual result. There are many reasons for this barrenness, painful and humiliating, connected with our spiritual condition, that may well give rise to searchings of heart. I single out one reason from the list—not, perhaps, the worst—but which is little thought of, and which, I am persuaded, operates more extensively and injuriously than we imagine; namely, disregard of the Divine order according to which work proceeds. If a blacksmith should begin to hammer a bar of iron into a new shape before he has heated it red-hot, his strokes, however vigorous and well-directed, would be useless. If a farmer should scatter his seed before he has ploughed the ground, there would be a poor account of his labour in the harvest time. In like manner, if a Christian church should set at naught the spiritual order which God has established, the church cannot expect full blessing. It is of high importance, therefore—I do not say the highest—that we should distinctly know what the order is, and accept it. What, then, must go before work in order to make it fruitful? It seems to me, so far as I understand, that there are three fixed conditions to be observed; and that where these conditions are observed, the Divine order will be secured throughout, and down to the minutest detail.

The first of these fixed conditions I would indicate by saying—Life and Work. When I say Life, I say regeneration, or whatever other name may be given to that mighty change that stands at the commencement of all experience that is distinctively Christian. I say also love, self-consecration, joy in God, and so on, according to all that you see in Jesus Christ, who is the Eternal Life manifested. I say also meditation, prayer, Divine fellowship, Mary-like sitting at Jesus' feet, and all that nurtures and glorifies life, not one of these things (under spiritual penalties) to be displaced or crushed into a corner by the demand for work. Now it is one of the clearest things in Christianity that true "well-doing" is the fruit and expression of the inner life, and, in turn, the means of enlarging and deepening life. Theoretically we not merely admit this, but lay stress

upon it—indeed, it is one of the common-places of our teaching; I need not therefore, stay to bring forward proofs. But how is it practically? Looking with keen and honest eyes into the things we do for the glory of Christ's name and the blessing of our fellow-men, does it hold good throughout that our works "are wrought in God?"—that they are the outcome of the life of God in our bosoms? I infer, respecting the Church to which Christ said, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead," that they displayed a large amount of outward activity—that they were full of religious talk, and bustle, and fuss, and zeal of a certain kind, and vehement effort. That is how churches get a name for life. And yet they were dead. Taking our own case, and looking to ourselves, how does it stand with us? All true Christian work must be the outcome of spiritual life, even as our words in prayer should be the expression of Spirit-kindled desire. If we sincerely and fearlessly accept this condition, it will, I am persuaded, prevent a thousand errors of practice, and do much to revivify, invigorate, and ennoble our Christian well-doing.

The second fixed condition determining the order of work, I would indicate by saying—Divine Appointment and Work. When the Lord wins our hearts, He gives us something to do for Him, fully and exactly suitable for us. He may employ many of us about the same service, as He sends many showers to water the earth, or many rain-drops to the root of the same plant; but He gives to two of us exactly the same thing to do. This Divine appointment of service is the thing that prevents confusion and dispersion of energies, and that secures harmonious co-operation throughout the whole realm of work—freedom, breadth, and scope for Christian individuality in all its force and variedness and delicacy. Now, all our planning and doing must rest on this Divine appointing. Any other ground is false. The work we undertake must be work which the Lord assigns to us, which He means us in particular to undertake for Him, and which, through His grace, we are fitted or may become fitted, for doing. It is not doing something that is required, but doing the given thing; not doing what we choose but what the Lord chooses for us. You remember, for example, how Paul and his companions were forbidden to preach the Word in Asia, were not suffered to go into Bithynia, but were guided across to Europe. You remember how Jesus Himself speaks of His work as work which the Father gave Him to do; and how He says, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what he seeth the Father do;" and again, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"—the Son falling in with the mind of the Father.

Now, there are subtle and powerful tendencies in us to decline this second condition—to regard it as somehow involving fanaticism; to self-choose our work; to choose it according to fancy or liking, instead of receiving it from the Lord. This is one of our perils—this selfwill that does not accept the Divine choice, that does not say, "Thy will be done." There are many Christian people who would like to do great things, who would gird themselves for heroic services, who are always waiting for great opportunities, and so do nothing at all. These are the most useless people in our Churches, and the greatest obstructionists. They neglect the work laid to their hand; indeed, life slips past, and they accomplish nothing. For myself, so far as I can understand Scripture, I believe in a Divine plan under which we are to work—a plan which we cannot comprehend, which we do not need to comprehend, which (enough to say) is comprehended by the Lord, which embraces us all, and in which every one of us has his own natural place, and his own set of things to do. If we inquire, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" He will tell us, somehow or other, if we ask in faith and listen for

His answer, willing to do His will; somehow or other, He will make it plain to our judgment and reason what He means for us in particular, so that we shall be able to say with assurance, "This is the Divine will for me." I believe there is what might almost be called a private teaching of the Lord in reference to this matter. No scheme can be invented which shall save us the need of enquiring of the Lord; and all devices that seem to do so are vain, sometimes pernicious. Now, it is a fixed condition of "well-doing" for Christian men that we accept the Lord's will in the work He assigns us, unrebellingly and heartily. I may cover the place of a captain among the soldiers of the Cross; but if the Lord says, "Stand there as a sentry, on that outpost, and be shot at!" then the noblest and most fruitful service I can render is to take the sentry's place, and be faithful unto death.

I am afraid that neglect or violation of this condition has much to do with those jostlings and collisions and strifes between churches, and the embittered feelings evoked, which are so treasonous to Christ, and have done so much to hinder His work. Two sister churches have claimed some particular piece of work for their own—some corner of a field to cultivate, some nook of the Lord's vineyard; they have quarrelled over it; long and bitter strife has followed; the Holy Spirit has been grieved; and the corner of the vineyard has been trampled down by unholy feet in the unholy strife. And the sad thing is, the strife has been as unnecessary as it was sinful, having arisen because one or both parties chose for themselves instead of letting the Lord choose for them. It has not even occurred to them that they might meet together and pray—"Lord, shew us Thy will."

The third fixed condition I would indicate by saying—Faith and Work. "Trust in the Lord and do good." In such a line the unchangeable order is disclosed. Faith comes first—faith, that sees God in the appointment of our work, that regards Him as infinitely more interested in it than we can be, that recognises personal weakness and nothingness, that relies upon His all-sufficient grace and almightiness, that binds every working-day in clasps of morning and evening prayer, that counts on answers to prayer, that says with full assurance, "The Lord of Hosts is with us;" that faith goes first, and then work follows, meek, strong, and patient. In other words, the Divine order is, to lay self utterly aside, to believe in God, and to let Him work both in us and by us, that He may fulfil the "good pleasure of His goodness."

I assume that, theoretically, we all recognise this order. But, again, how is it practically? Do we never go counter to the deep blessed principle involved in the words, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain"; You sometimes hear William Carey's famous words misquoted—the misquotation significant of a tone of mind not only in the speaker, but in the hearers who listen approvingly—"Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God; Wm. Carey knew his Bible better, and said, 'Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God' faith going before and animating man's endeavour. Depend upon it, the difference is not a mere verbal one, but very real and very deep.

Under this third condition, then, as one to whom God has given life, I take in hand the work He assigns me, whatever it may be, with faith in Him—the faith being as essential for the easiest work as for the most difficult. I feel myself to be a labourer together with Him. I do not comprehend His purposes and plan; I cannot tell what He means to do with me. But I am sure He does not require me to turn mill-stones that grind nothing; I am sure He does not send me out on a forlorn hope that is to issue in disas-

ter. Whatever may come to me personally, because he is to succeed, my work (which is His work in me) can be no failure; and so I work on, with confidence begotten of the words; "Your labour is not in vain in the Lord;" "In due season"—known to Him who has the times and seasons in His own power—"in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not."

These three conditions, so far as I can see, determine the order of Christian work throughout, and down to the minutest detail: Life and Work—Divine Appointment and Work—Faith and Work. I am satisfied that if we comply with them, simply and faithfully, throughout the whole region of Christian service, we shall find our work more joyful in the doing, and more fruitful of good.

THE SAME GOD.

There was once a lady who was visiting her friends in Boston, and as she was making arrangements to return home, a friend asked if she would take her little boy with her, as she wanted to send him to visit his grandparents near whose house the lady was going on her way home.

She readily consented to take charge of him, and found him to be a 'bright little fellow, and a very pleasant companion.

It was before railroads were made, and they went in a stage, and as it was quite a distance, they had to stop one night on the way. The little boy was tired, and when the lady took him up stairs, she thought as the room was cold she would not ask him to say his prayers till he was in bed.

When she had got him snugly tucked up, she asked him if he did not want to pray.

"No," he replied.

She was surprised, and asked,

"What, don't you want to say your prayers?"

"No," was his decided answer.

"Why," said she, "papa prayed this morning that the Lord would take care of us, and He has taken care of us, and now don't you want to thank Him?" He started up and asked earnestly,

"Is it the same God here that my papa prays to at home?"

Being assured that it was he seemed to feel quite at home, said his prayers, and thanked the Lord for taking care of them on their journey, and wanted his friend to pray, "because," said he, "it is the same God we have at home."

When the lady went down he told her she might take the light, for he was not afraid since God was there.

Our little friend was not the first person who supposed that in leaving home he had left his father's God. Even Jacob, when departing from the tents of Isaac, was astonished at the visions of Bethel, and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." Gen. xxviii: 16. And older persons who have seen in a clearer light the glory of the omnipresent God, often act when on a journey as if God was left behind. Blessed are they who in every condition are assured of the presence of "the same God," and who "pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath or doubting."

"Well knowing that Jesus resides everywhere,

And can in all places give answers to prayer."

—Little Christian.

RELIGION TEACHING HOW TO COUNT.

There is an island on the coast of Virginia, the inhabitants of which get their living by fishing and catching oysters and clams. For a long time they had no church or Sunday School among them. They were a wicked set of people, and tried to cheat everybody with whom they had any dealings. After a while a good faithful minister was sent amongst them. He preached to them about Jesus and tried to get them to love and obey him. And no persons can do this without