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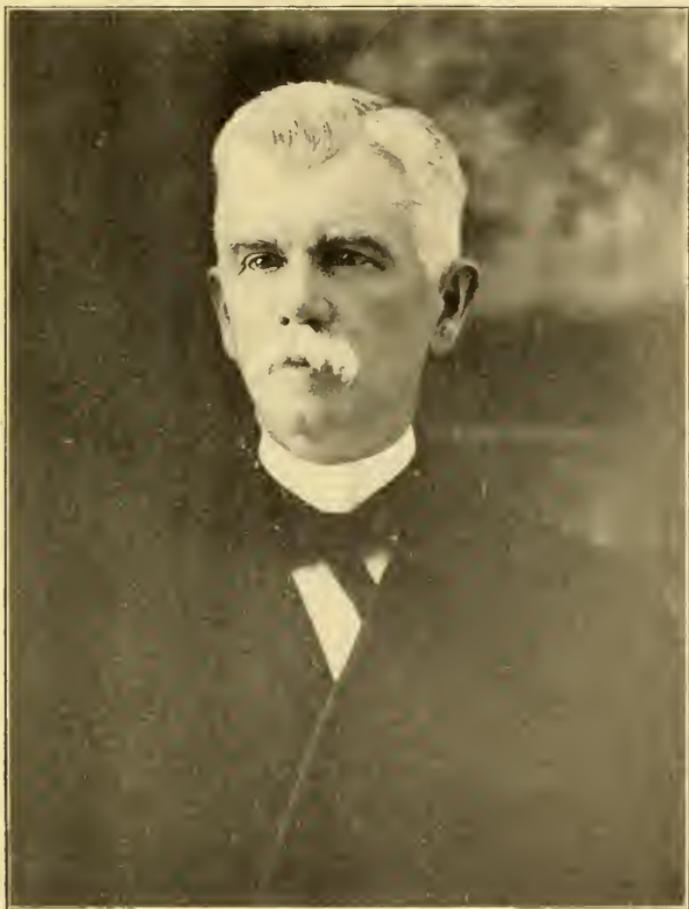


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HOW MAY THE PRINCIPLES OF CALVINISM BE RENDERED MOST EFFECTIVE UNDER MODERN CONDITIONS?

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The task assigned to me is constructive and practical. It is not explanatory, nor historical, nor apologetic. I am not asked to tell what Calvinism is, nor to relate what it has done, nor to prove that it is true. While I may refer to these themes in the course of my remarks, my main purpose is different. Accepting Calvinism as we find it, assuming that it is true, noting what is peculiar and dominant in modern conditions, forecasting the future as best we may, I am asked to suggest a way by which that system of truth which has wrought mightily in the past may so adjust itself to these modern conditions as to yield the best results.

My diffidence in this undertaking is increased by the thought that in this question the entire Calvin celebration culminates. A mere sentimental celebration of the past is alien to the spirit of Calvinism, which seeks only to glorify God and serve humanity. If, therefore, our review of the past does not yield a substantial contribution to the present, the celebration will so far have failed of its object.

It will aid our efforts to solve this difficult problem if we can get a fuller interpretation of the question pro-

posed, "How May the Principles of Calvinism be Rendered Most Effective Under Modern Conditions?" What are the "Modern Conditions" referred to? What is meant by "the Principles of Calvinism"? What is intended by making them "effective"; or, in other words, what is the "effect" which it is desired that Calvinism shall produce? Let us then, as a preparation for the main question, first consider these three preliminary ones.

I. What are the "Modern Conditions" referred to? What is there in the present attitude of thought and life that distinguishes this age from other ages in which Calvinism has won its victories and done its work?

1. The first of these I would mention is the materialistic tendency of Natural Science. Natural Science proceeds upon the correct principle that it must concern itself only with observed and recorded facts and with those theories which may reasonably be deduced from such facts, and that moreover it must confine itself to those facts which are perceived through the senses. But the phenomena of spirit not being cognizable by the senses, those phenomena are not properly within the purview of Natural Science. Just here two dangers emerge. The exclusive absorption of the attention with material facts leads to the ignoring of those other spiritual facts which are the proper subjects of another science, and so there results a one-sided development of thought. Or else, departing from its own guiding principle to confine itself to its own established facts, Natural Science draws inferences and makes confident assertions concerning spiritual phenomena, which confessedly it does not and cannot observe. Consequently it neglects God and Spirit or denies the existence of either.

This science, not always equally materialistic, but always with a powerful tendency in that direction, holds a commanding and ascending position in the schools. It is fascinating to the young, it colors literature, it controls the practical arts, and in a circle far wider than that in which its facts are known, it causes a feeling of uneasiness lest the foundations of the faith have been shaken.

2. Another factor of the modern situation is the destructive criticism of the Bible. The postulate of a divinely inspired, infallible, sufficient revelation from God is essential to Christianity. The Bible is valuable not merely because it contains a revelation of God, for in a measure natural theology might take the place of that. Nor is it valuable merely because it contains the purest and most correct system of ethics, for in a measure moral philosophy might supply the deficiency there. The Bible is distinguished in that it offers a scheme for the forgiveness of sin, and in that it tells how good morals may be achieved and spiritual life acquired. In this, it is not to be classed with other religious books and flattered as the best of books. Its position is unique and transcendent. It is "the Book."

Modern criticism begins by denying or discrediting the possibility of a supernatural origin for the Bible. Proceeding with a learning that is not always the pledge of wisdom, with an ingenuity that is too often divorced from discretion, and with an industry which "the children of light" would do well to emulate, it subjects every word of the sacred volume to a merciless manipulation and it ransacks the archives of all the ages and the places mentioned in the Bible in the effort to prove a purely natural and human origin for it. Not abashed by its

experience in the past, in which similar results, reached by similar methods, have been ignominiously overthrown by fuller knowledge, and in favor of historic Christianity, it continues to proclaim its conclusions with a confidence that intimidates all those who have not equal learning and better judgment, or who have not the inward and incontestable witness of the Spirit.

3. Another obtrusive fact in the confusion of modern conditions is the prevalence and growth of Socialism, whether as an economic, ethical, or religious theory. The goal of Socialism is a state of society in which there shall be something approaching an equal distribution among men of the enjoyment of the world's wealth. Sometimes this is advocated as a policy of statesmanship, and so it is economic in its character. Sometimes it is urged as the dictate of justice, and so is ethical. Sometimes it is claimed to be an inference from the universal brotherhood of man as taught in the Bible, and so it becomes religious. Socialism is fostered, on the one hand, by some of the most generous impulses of the human heart, drawn out into active expression by beautiful visions of self sacrifice and of a universal betterment of humanity. It is fostered, on the other hand, by some of the most powerful and dangerous forces of human nature, the hunger, the nakedness, the suffering, the sense of wrong of an oppressed and intelligent poverty, provoked and aggravated by the surfeiting and waste, the pride and tyranny, the vulgar display and even the religious professions of wealth. There may have been as much poverty in the world before, as there is to-day, and as much dense crowding and unhappiness of the poor. There may have been as much arrogance and coldness and cruelty of wealth. But never before

have these conditions been accompanied by such intelligence of the poor, caused by free education, free speech, and marvellously cheapened literature. One result of all this is a startling attitude towards religion—an admiration, amounting almost to reverence, for Jesus of Nazareth, but an envenomed hostility to the church.

4. Another modern movement with which Calvinism must reckon is a nascent civilization in the Far East. In China and Japan and Korea there are kindred races comprising more than one-fourth of the human family. They occupy lands opulent in those natural resources by which great nations may be sustained. They are characterized by a virile personality and an intelligence of the highest order that has lain fallow and has gathered substance through many ages. At a single vault they leap into the arena of the great nations of the world. At once they master all the domain of knowledge which the West had laboriously acquired through centuries. In fifty years, "a cycle of Europe" is acquired by Cathay. They awake to the consciousness of undeveloped power. They not only challenge the prestige of western powers, but, breaking with their own paganism, are ready to embrace Christianity or "modernism," whichever shall first arrest their attention and win their allegiance. If Christianity is embraced, millennial conditions are accelerated, but if they choose modernism, the redemption of the world is indefinitely postponed.

5. Another feature of the modern world which demands the attention of the church, though it is exceptional in this age only in the degree and manner of its self assertion, is sensuality. When we consider the brazen immoralities of that which calls itself "high so-

ciety," and its impudent defiance of most sacred institutions and conventionalities; when we think of the growing pruriency of fiction and of the stage, and the prostitution of marriage to the ends of convenience and of lust; when we see how the same spirit has invaded the very chair of ethics in some of the strongest institutions of learning in the land, and those set to teach morality express doubt as to the reality of virtue; and when we witness the inroads upon the church of those forms of worldliness whose perils lie in the same direction, we see abundant cause for apprehension lest sensuality may have a powerful hold on modern life.

6. Still another condition is the decline of family religion and of the religious instruction of the young in the home. The excellent sermon on this subject preached by the Moderator at the opening of this Assembly leaves nothing more to be said about that at this time.

7. This sketch is not complete but only suggestive, yet it should not be concluded without a glance at the bright side. There is more consecration of wealth and more evangelistic and missionary activity in the church to-day than there has ever been since the days of the early church. There is more systematic study of the Scriptures and of problems of church work than there has ever been. There are as fine examples of Christian conscience in public life as the world has ever seen. There is the strongest sense of the spiritual unity of Christendom.

II. What is meant by "the Principles of Calvinism"? The principles of Calvinism are its essential parts as opposed to its accidental parts. They are that without which Calvinism would cease to be Calvinism. They are

the germinal and regulative principles out of which it springs and by which it is moulded. We must distinguish between the principles of Calvinism and that complete system of belief which Calvin himself held. We must distinguish between the principles of Calvinism and any creed held by any Christian organization calling itself Calvinistic, just as we distinguish between the principles of Republican government and any one form of Republican Government. The government may be Republican in its general plan and yet may embody monarchical or other features inconsistent with its central principle. And so Calvinism, powerful, acute, accurate logician as he was, was nevertheless finite and fallible. In the carrying out of his principles he may have been unconsciously influenced to some extent by education and by the circumstances of his life, and so he may have held some views that could not be reconciled with his other opinions. For a stronger reason we conclude that Calvinistic denominations, in the elaboration of their doctrinal formulas, may have produced creeds that were not logically consistent throughout. There may even be some denominations which hold to the radical principles of Calvinism and yet so far fail in the application of those principles in constructing their creeds as to deny some tenets which are characteristic of Calvinism and themselves repudiate the name.

With these general comments, and without pausing to defend my statement, I submit for your approval an outline sketch of the principles of Calvinism. It includes a belief:

1. In an objective personal God, who is infinitely interested in each individual of his creation, and is immediately accessible to each, and to whom each is immediately responsible.

2. The utter wreck of man's spiritual nature by sin, totally disabling him for holiness and alienating him from God.

3. The absolute dependence of ruined man upon the mercy of God for devising, executing, revealing and personally applying whatever scheme of restoration may be possible for man.

4. The granting to the believer of a restoration through the atonement of Christ, so complete that the image of God is regained and every trace of sin is lost, and of such a nature as to be forever indestructible.

5. The establishment of a fellowship between God and the individual redeemed, so free, so unrestrained, that the whole life is fertilized by divine impulses, and all the resources of life are brought under spontaneous contribution to the glory of God.

How deeply do the "five points of Calvinism" enter into this scheme! It enables us to understand what Guizot said of Calvin, that his mind moved in the circle of three chapters of his *Institutes*. The subjects of those chapters are:

1. Man's need of the Bible in order to obtain peace with God.

2. Reason can satisfactorily prove that the Scriptures are a revelation from God.

3. Man's absolute dependence upon the influences of the Holy Spirit in order to understand aright and to appropriate what the Bible contains.

The outline I have drawn perhaps also gives us Dr.

Kuyper's point of view when he says in one place that the distinctive tenet of Calvinism is "The exalted thought that although standing in high majesty above the creature, God enters into immediate fellowship with the creature"; and when he says again, "The persuasion that the whole of a man's life is to be lived as in the divine presence has become the fundamental thought of Calvinism"; and again when he says, "The assurance of eternal Salvation" was the inspiration of the fortitude and the courage of those who suffered martyrdom for the faith and who achieved the victories of Calvinism.

The principles of Calvinism I have given are those which pertain to the doctrines of grace, to which I must be confined this morning. But it should be noted in passing that out of these principles of grace there grow principles of church government sufficient for discipline, and principles of worship, simple, whole-hearted and majestic, and other principles which regulate one's moral and intellectual life, and his domestic, social, industrial and civil relations.

III. What is meant by rendering these principles "effective"? What is the effect we should wish Calvinism to produce?

I submit that the effect we should desire is not to make the gospel popular. Christ did not do that. It is not to adorn religion with artificial attractions, to appeal to the taste or imagination or even the intellect, and so to make it pleasing to the natural heart, for "then is the offense of the Cross ceased." It is not to multiply adherents, admirers, professors and financial supporters. Of what advantage is it that we have plethoric church rolls and houses of worship crowded with enthusiastic listeners if men do not forsake sin and selfishness for

God and service, and if there be in men no power to transform the life and no foretokens of the perfect life of heaven? The effect we should desire is the creation of spiritual life in man. It is the bringing of men by regeneration into the spiritual kingdom of God, and it is the developing in them by sanctification of a character consonant with the nature of the spiritual kingdom and an anticipation of the heavenly and eternal state. Through individuals so affected we should seek to mold communities and through communities to impress the nation. And thus in ever widening circles we should send out saving influences to the uttermost parts of the earth.

IV. And now we reach the main question. "How May the Principles of Calvinism be Rendered Most Effective Under Modern Conditions?"

In this discussion we must assume that the principles of Calvinism are correct. As a matter of fact we do absolutely believe they are correct. We are Calvinists not from heredity, nor from education, nor from environment, but from individual conviction of the truth of Calvinism. What have we then? Here is a positive, well defined, divine arrangement for the redemption of man and for restoring him to the image, the fellowship, and the service of God. All this is contained in the Bible. We believe it is correctly reproduced in the Calvinistic statement. While then there is no rescinding of this arrangement by divine warrant and no modification of it, while there is no change in the nature of God and no change in the nature of man, we are compelled to act upon the assumption that it is a permanent arrangement adapted to all conditions of humanity in all ages. Inspired revelation is not progressive but fixed. Our un-

derstanding of it may increase and become better clarified, but here we have no question as to the substantial correctness of our interpretation. Thus Calvinism contains an economy ordained in the wisdom of the Most High for meeting and controlling all possible developments of human life and thought.

It may be interesting and useful to us to examine the changing phases of human society and ascertain what in them is most congenial with Calvinism, and what Calvinism may use. For instance, the radical principle of Socialism is but the perversion of a principle for which the world is indebted through Calvinism to the Bible. Calvinism teaches us that God is equally accessible to all men and that all men are equally responsible to God. There is then a sort of equality among men which they must recognize. But Socialism goes to the impossible extreme of making that equality absolute, and so obliterates distinctions which the Creator Himself established. Take another illustration. There are more than two hundred million Moslems in the world who believe in fatalism, and there are more than four hundred million Chinese who believe in some form of predestination. These together comprise more than one-third of the human family and more than a half of the unevangelized races, and all this large proportion of the population of the world holds to a more or less perverted form of a doctrine which is distinctive of Calvinism, the sovereignty of God. Or take another illustration. Calvinism, with a better grace than any other religion, can say to Natural Science, You have shown the world more than it has ever known before of the splendor and beauty of creation. You have taught the world more clearly than it has ever known before how the

beautiful order of the universe has been wrought out by a plan. Is it not more reasonable to believe that the explanation of this world is the presence of a master intelligence rather than the operation of an unconscious force?"

But after all we must at last confront the fact that we may not depend and need not depend on any natural easy process. Calvinism if it be God's truth has in it a divine energy intended to overcome and fitted to overcome every kind and degree of opposition. The opposition of to-day may differ in form but does not differ in substance from that of other days. That opposition arises from vicious reasoning and a depraved heart. It was a false philosophy and a corrupt society which Calvin confronted and overcame. Guizot says, "The principal and most formidable characteristics of the sixteenth century were its political disturbances, its public immorality and its ardent intellectual outburst, and Calvin was simultaneously resisting all of them." That was a greater task than we have to-day, because the political disturbances, at least, are no longer a feature of the conflict. The proclamation of the truth accompanied by the gracious working of God was ever the means by which the opposition was subdued. Christ said, "Preach the Gospel, and lo, I am with you." On Pentecost Peter narrated the story of Jesus of Nazareth, and the Holy Ghost fell on the multitude and thousands were converted. At Antioch, they preached "the Word" and they preached "the Lord Jesus," and "the hand of the Lord was upon them," and "a great number believed and turned unto the Lord."

A small group of propagandists, with the world against them, with the prestige of heathenism and Judaism in op-

position, with the most powerful military government of history actively hostile, clogged by subtle and false philosophies within, nevertheless transfused the Roman empire with Christianity. The teachings of Christ, the sermons recorded in the Acts, the Epistles, which did this work, contain those doctrines which have been formulated in Calvinism. If such is the force of this truth when it is preached "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," what may it not accomplish?

When the Reformation came in the sixteenth century, both false doctrine and corruption of character were entrenched in the citadel of the church itself. The revolt was not only against corruption. It went deeper and challenged the doctrinal errors which made that corruption possible. The doctrine of the Reformation did not crystallize in Luther. Under God, all honor to Luther for his initiative, his lion-hearted courage, his indefatigable labors, his strongly loving and strongly hating nature and for his sublime leadership. But the doctrine of the Reformation did not come to its crystalline form in Luther, but in Calvin. The believers in Calvinism, strong in their knowledge of the truth, in the presence of God's Spirit, and in their assurance of eternal life, whether they were found in Germany, in the Netherlands, in Switzerland, in France, in Spain, or in Great Britain, blanched not before church or state or any human tribunal. They faltered not for fire or sword, or axe, or rope, or rack or any instrument of torture that man or devil could devise, they feared not to assail sin or error, and again the victory was won against fallacious reasoning and immoral conduct.

Calvinism is the most powerful evangelistic agency ever employed. In the seventeenth, eighteenth and nine-

teenth centuries, revivals of religion, notable for the intensity of feeling stirred, the number of people affected and the nature and permanency of the results that followed, swept over Great Britain and the United States. The stock of the preaching was Calvinistic.

In local communities, a character for piety, for industry, for integrity, for heroism, for altruism, for initiative has been imparted and transmitted for many generations. Every type of moral character has been reached and regenerated by it. The dissolute, the drunkard, the burglar, the liar, the indifferent, the violently hostile, the ignorant, the highly educated, the moral, the phlegmatic, the emotional, the supercilious, all alike come under conviction of sin and helplessness and cry, "What must I do to be saved"? And all alike being converted cry with Thomas, "My Lord and my God," and with Saul of Tarsus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

All of this being true and the question being, "How may the principles of Calvinism be rendered most effective under modern conditions?" the answer is two-fold:

1. Let Calvinism in its integrity be boldly avowed and aggressively pressed. It is not a time for cowardice, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the Holy City." Let not the church be afraid of it nor afraid to preach it. As some one has said, "The truth needs no caretakers, it needs only witnesses." Let not the truth be suppressed or concealed. Let it not be compromised nor amended at the dictation of its enemies. Let it not be glossed to please an unbelieving world. It has always done its work in the open field and not in hiding and not by indirection. It has done its work as a whole and

not as a mutilated system. Then let it be proclaimed with confidence.

To say that men will no longer hear doctrinal preaching is a mistake. Only let the preacher himself find a throbbing life in the theme, and let the truth live in his own being, and he will make it live in the lives of his hearers. The street preacher is not afraid of this truth and he has his reward. Thousands turn away from discussions in the pulpit of current events and social topics, and political issues, and merely ethical questions, and try to fill themselves with the husks of occult and puerile philosophies.

Following this suggestion we shall need several things:

I. A ministry thoroughly and boldly in sympathy with Calvinism. Let the emphasis of theological instruction continue to rest upon the chair of systematic theology and increase the emphasis. Let all the learning of the college, the university, and the theological Seminary be focused upon a doctrinal education. Let the doctrine be supported by sound exegesis on the one hand and sound philosophy on the other. Give us a scholarship in the ministry, capable of stating the truth, thoroughly informed as to its history and its bearings on other knowledge and on life, and able to defend the truth at every point of attack. Why should we not have a learning in the pulpit as broad, as deep, as accurate, as highly tempered as any to be found in professors chairs, in the laboratories of science, or in the researches of the field and the forest? If Buckle's observation be correct that the tendency of Arminianism is to produce scholars, and the tendency of Calvinism is to produce thinkers, we need to give special attention to this suggestion.

Yet, far be it from us to disparage personal piety as a requisite for the ministry. As between the minister whose knowledge of the truth and conviction of it are only intellectual, and the man whose "life is hid with Christ in God," evermore give us the man who has obtained his knowledge at first hand, from communion with God and from the Spirit's illumination of the word.

But not only should the minister be in contact with the truth and with God, in order that he may bring the influence of both to bear on human life he must be in sympathetic contact with humanity. The Good Shepherd was responsive to every human impulse and should not the under shepherd know and feel all that is in man? More than in any previous age does the man of God need to be a man among men, acquainted with their conditions and sharing those conditions, loving and being loved, ministering a Christ-like sympathy and help to every kind of man.

In many cases these three phases of ministerial education, the scholastic, the spiritual and the practical, may be united in the same person. The ministry as a whole should be distinguished by all of them.

Then, with the best and most practical men in the pulpit, let the voice of the people and high ideals in Presbytery make it not only possible but imperative that preaching shall be something more than merely emotional, or evangelistic, or hortatory, or ethical and never dryly dogmatic. Let it be all the counsel of God, the word of God "which liveth and abideth forever," the most effective implement of evangelism, the surest ethical foundation.

2. Denominational institutions of learning. By denominational institutions is meant not necessarily those

under ecclesiastical control. A school may be under ecclesiastical control and altogether negative in religious character. A school may not be under ecclesiastical control and yet saturated to the core with the denominational spirit. A school is denominational only when the influence of its instruction and its school life is positively and strongly denominational. Far hence with the thought that a man cannot be an instructor of the highest order because he has decided religious beliefs. Away with the suggestion that Calvinism may not furnish teachers who are the equals of any other teachers. And again let us give no heed to the claim that successful instruction is hindered, when there are parallel efforts made for the spiritual conversion of the student and his sound indoctrination. Let not the Syren voice of money allure us to destruction upon such rocky shores.

Let all the facts of science be fearlessly told, whether of geology, biology, sociology, archaeology or comparative religion. "The truth needs no caretakers." But back of all science place the fact, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and let the terminus of all science be, "For Thy glory they were and are created." Let Calvin and Calvinism be given their rightful place in history. Why should there be any more sensitiveness about assigning Calvinism its proper place in modern history than there is in discussing the Mecklenburg Declaration or the responsibility for the loss of Gettysburg? Let the science of government be so taught that the contribution of Calvinistic principles to civil liberty and to right theories of government may be clearly seen. Let ethics and political economy acknowledge their indebtedness to it. Let the Bible be taught in all its bearings upon individual life, and marriage, and the

family and the state. And let not a pseudo-liberality lead us to suppress the denominational name and intention of our schools. The eloquent Dr. Moses D. Hoge once remarked, "Presbyterians are the only people who make that mistake."

3. A revival of catechetical instruction in the family and in the Sabbath school, and a rebuilding of the family altar. The stream is not apt to rise higher than its source nor to be purer than its fountain head. Not only should the rythmical clauses of the catechism be given to the memory as the molds for future thought, but all explanations of Scripture, all moral lessons, all parental counsel, all wooings of the heart for Christ should be given with a distinct consciousness of the Calvinistic point of view. Then continue to develop the Sunday school along the lines already adopted, until it shall become as effective in its sphere as the public school is in its.

4. Once more, we need with all of this, not less but more catholic spirit, a sincere, generous, loving appreciation of our fellow Christians of whatever denominational name and of whatever creed, because of their service to the truth and because of the souls they have brought to a common Master.

II. The second answer to the principal question is that we should seek, and not cease our seeking till we obtain, copious, deep, wide-spread outpourings of the Holy Spirit. The truth alone without the supernatural grace of God's Spirit has no saving and sanctifying efficacy, whatever natural power it may have. In all the great genuine movements of the church the presence of the Spirit of God has overshadowed all other circum-

stances. What we need for modern conditions is the almighty supernatural working of God, causing the truth to dispel the darkness, and converting hostility into loving submission and worship. The occasion calls for patience and prayer.

For any distrust of the truth, for any compromise with the world, for any recreancy to duty, "let the ministers of the Lord weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach." "Then will the Lord be jealous and pity His people. Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto His people, Behold, I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen." When the divine challenge comes, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city," let the church say, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old."

"Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered."

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; Thou that dwellest between the Cherubims, shine forth.

Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us."

"Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts, cause Thy face to shine and we shall be saved."