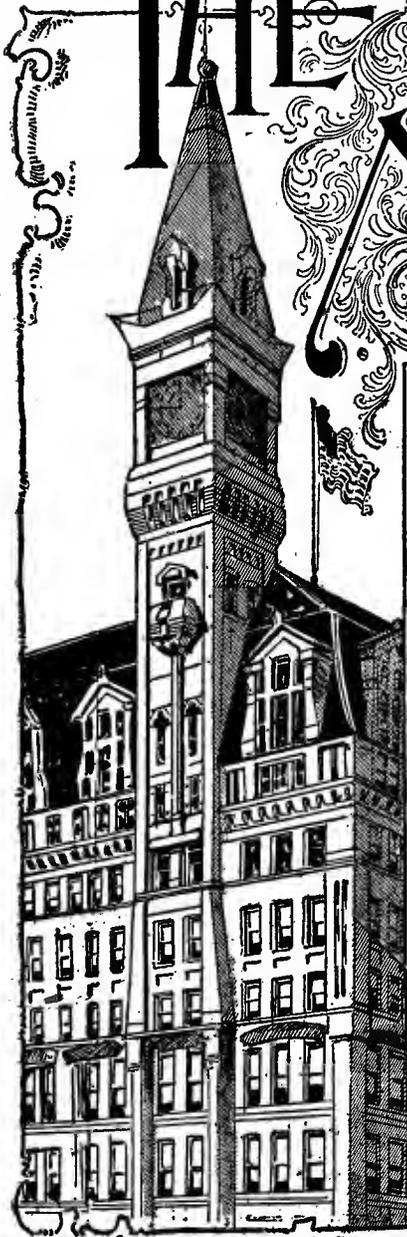




THE TRIBUNE MONTHLY:



Vol. IV.

May, 1892.

No. 5.

PRESBYTERIAN ISSUES.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1892.

REVISION AND DR. BRIGGS.

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PRESBYTERIAN ISSUES.

The General Assembly of 1892—Revision and Dr. Briggs.

THE PORTLAND MEETING.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SESSION.

IMPORTANT ISSUES TO COME BEFORE THE BODY

—SPECIAL TRAINS ACROSS THE CONTINENT

—EXTENSIVE LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS

—SKETCHES OF LEADING MEN.

Portland, Ore., April 29.—The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America will hold its 104th annual meeting in the First Church of this city, beginning Thursday, May 19. A sermon by the retiring Moderator, Dr. William Henry Green, of Princeton Theological Seminary, will be delivered at 11 a. m., and in the afternoon a new Moderator will be chosen, and the work of the Assembly will begin. Morning and afternoon sessions will be held for ten days, the evenings being reserved for popular meetings in the interests of the several boards of the church.

For a number of years the project of bringing the Presbyterians to this part of the country has been under discussion, and after numerous consultations and, what was equally important, the laying aside of a mileage fund large enough for the increased expenses consequent upon such an extended trip, the claims of the Pacific Northwest were seriously considered last year, at Detroit, Mich. Invitations were received from Calvary Church, of San Francisco, and the First Church of this city. The San Francisco claim was urged in eloquent addresses, but the speech that captured the Assembly was given by Dr. A. G. Brown, the pastor of the First Church, who made these six points: (1) How Portland came to invite the Assembly; (2) the unanimity and heartiness of Portland's invitation; (3) the preparations already made; (4) the facilities for handling the Assembly; (5) the magnitude of the interests affected, and (6) the reflex influence which would be exerted upon the Church at large.

When it was decided to hold the Assembly on the Pacific Coast, the question of transportation was the chief difficulty, but this has been overcome by Dr. W. H. Roberts, the stated clerk, who has secured a round-trip ticket for a single fare, entitling the holder to come by one route and return by another. As the Assembly pays the expenses of the commissioners, there has been a perfect willingness on the part of many Eastern brethren to make the sacrifice required by their Church. Special trains are promised from New-York over the Pennsylvania and New-York Central roads, and at Chicago they will separate, one coming over the Northern Pacific, another over the Canadian Pacific, and a third over the Santa Fe route, the first stopping at Helena, Mont., over Sunday, and

the other two at Salt Lake City. As it is impossible to make the run from Chicago to Portland after Monday morning in time to be present at the opening session on Thursday, additional trains will leave Chicago on Saturday evening, Sunday being spent at St. Paul or Omaha, according to the route taken.

REPORT OF THE REVISION COMMITTEE.

As Portland is on home missionary ground, or was so a short time ago, it is intended to make the coming meeting as far as possible a missionary assembly, although it will be impossible to sink the two great questions that are to come up this year. Chief among them are the revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the position of Dr. Briggs and the Union Theological Seminary, in New-York. There are many who think that the report of the Revision Committee, admirable though it is, and prepared though it has been by some of the ablest scholars and elders of the Church, including Dr. Green and President Patton, of Princeton; Dr. Herrick Johnson, of McCormick; Dr. E. D. Morris, of Lane; Dr. Matthew B. Riddle, of Allegheny; Dr. Willis J. Beecher, of Auburn; Dr. William Alexander, of San Francisco; Dr. W. C. Roberts, formerly of Lake Forest University; Dr. W. E. Moore, of Columbus, Ohio; Dr. R. R. Booth, of New-York; Dr. S. J. Nicolls, of St. Louis, and Dr. Henry J. Van Dyke, of Brooklyn, will not satisfy the great body of Presbyterianism. The result is too radical for the conservatives, and too conservative for the radicals, and as the greater number of the ministers and elders are now, after the long debate on the question, in one of these two classes, it is difficult, they say, to prepare a revision creed which will satisfy them. Because of this fact, there is a vigorous movement on foot for a new creed, which shall be short, practical and Scriptural, emphasizing the love of God rather than His justice. A greater number of Presbyteries now unite in demanding the new creed than agreed to ask for a revision of the Westminster Standards, and as it was impossible for the Westminster Divines nearly 300 years ago to revise the Thirty-nine Articles, so it is thought that the present undertaking will fail and that another committee will be appointed to begin the new work.

The Revision Committee has published the changes made in the Confession as they will be reported to the Assembly, but instead of presenting the report as a whole for final adoption by the Presbyteries the members have agreed to send it down in separate overtures, some thirty in all. The overtures will be practically in this form: "Shall the fifth section of Chapter 1 be amended so as to read:—." After the required number of the Presbyteries say "Yes," the Confession will be revised to that extent, but if the requisite number of affirmative votes—two-thirds of the whole number—is not obtained, then that part of the Confession will remain as it is to-day. The only change

adopted this paper, which will be telegraphed to Dr. Green to-night:

"The General Assembly desires to express its high appreciation of your gospel of peace read this morning by Dr. Roberts. We regret exceedingly your inability to deliver it in person and pray that your health may soon be restored and that your life may long be spared to our Church and the country."

After the sermon the Assembly was constituted with prayer by Dr. Riheldoffer, the temporary moderator. Dr. Brown, of Portland, presented the report of the Committee on Arrangements, which provides that the sessions be held from 9 a. m. to noon and from 1 p. m. to 5 p. m., with evening sessions for popular meetings. The report also includes invitations for excursions to different points of interest.

The call for reports, which is generally made after the election of the moderator, was postponed until tomorrow, thus delaying business two hours at the outset. River excursions are planned for Saturday, thus throwing out a full day. The report that Dr. Briggs is on his way will delay action in his case until his arrival. With these setbacks at the outset the prospect for a short session is not cheering.

THE OPENING SERMON.

BY THE REV. DR. W. H. GREEN.

THE RETIRING MODERATOR UNABLE TO BE PRESENT, BUT SENDS A MESSAGE OF PEACE TO THE ASSEMBLY.

Portland, Ore., May 19.—The Rev. Dr. W. H. Green, the retiring moderator, though unable to be present had prepared his sermon, and it was read by the stated clerk as follows:

Isaiah 45:15.—Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

The Hebrew prophets were men of faith. And it is with eminent propriety that they too are mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews among the notable illustrations of the power of this grace; and that the catalogue, which begins with Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Moses, ends with "the prophets." Nothing can exceed the magnificence and the boldness, the seeming audacity even of their conceptions. Belonging to an inconsiderable people, occupying a limited territory, an easy prey as it would seem to the cupidity of the mighty empires then contending for the mastery of the world, they confidently announce that their God is the God of the whole earth; that Assyria and Babylon and Egypt are but instruments raised up by Him to do His pleasure; that the hope of mankind, the salvation of the world is bound up in Israel, before whom all opposing powers shall ultimately fall; and the coming Prince of the House of David shall exercise a universal and unresisted sway, extending His peaceful, holy and blessed reign over all the nations and peoples of the earth.

And this was not with them a mere dreamy and uninfluential conception. It was their most intimate and thorough persuasion; their fixed conviction which never wavered; the lamp, whose clear and steady flame enlightened the darkness of the most gloomy periods. They were never intimidated by gathering and imminent peril; they were never overwhelmed by disaster; they never yielded to despondency. Come what might, they drew unflinching encouragement from the sure hope of Israel, which was pledged by the unchanging promise of Him who built the earth and skies.

As their faith did not rest upon outward supports, it did not sink when such supports were withdrawn. As it was not the offspring of a temporary enthusiasm, it did not effervesce with changing states of mind. As it was not a mere patriotic fervor, it was not dashed even by the fatal obduracy and criminality and self-induced ruin of Israel themselves. Their spirit was one which would not succumb to adverse circumstances, which against hope believed in hope, which based itself solely on the almighty grace and the immutable word of God. To this word they clung with undoubting confidence,

though all that was outward and visible seemed to contradict it. They still affirmed the certainty of Israel's triumph, when the land was swept by foreign invasion and the people of God lay bleeding and helpless at the mercy of their cruel conquerors. They held fast to their assurance that holiness and salvation should come forth from Israel to bless the world, even when Israel themselves forsook the Lord, despised their birth-right, broke His covenant and provoked His judgments. Even in the foresight of disasters greater than any previously experienced they still nurtured their own faith and sustained the failing faith of others by appeals to God's enduring promise. And this, though they were not themselves permitted to behold that for which they had so anxiously and persistently waited.

God did not interpose to rescue them from their present foes and from the troubles that then threatened them. His Spirit did not interfere to check the tide of increasing sin and corruption. He Himself was hidden from their sight. They did not see His stately steps nor the baring of His arm of might. God shrouded Himself in impenetrable darkness. The mystery of His ways they were unable to fathom. But that He was nevertheless pervading, directing, controlling all and that He would bring all to His predestined and glorious end they never for one moment doubted. Their faith was that to which Isaiah gives utterance in the text. He is in vision transported out of the dark and checkered present to the glorious consummation. He sees the redemption of Israel and the world achieved. And, looking backward from the certainties of this blissful future over the obscurity and the calamities of the present and the intervening period, in which God's hand was steadily working and shaping the issue, though men saw Him not and outward sense utterly misapprehended His grand designs, he exclaims in holy rapture, "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

I. The faith thus commended by the example of the prophets in a God unseen is demanded of us all in every situation. It is the established condition of our earthly life that we are required to walk by faith and not by sight, to endure as seeing Him who is invisible, to transcend the merely tangible, outward and temporal, and pay supreme regard to what is unseen and eternal; to give our allegiance to an unseen king, unseen, but not unknown; to surrender ourselves to His will, govern ourselves by His commands, seek our happiness in Him, and denying ourselves and taking up our cross at His bidding to look for our reward in Heaven.

The eye cannot see God; sense cannot penetrate to Him; the most subtle analysis cannot detect His presence, no dissection can lay bare His working; the most profound investigation cannot go beyond the links of physical causation. Since each phenomenon can be traced to its physical cause, which is itself dependent upon some prior cause, and this on another still, and so on with no assignable limit, is not all shut up to the domain of fixed invariable law, with no room left for divine interference or control? So wise men of this generation have judged; and refusing credence to that which eludes the grasp of the senses, they would exclude God from the universe that He has made; and in all this marvellous display of wonder-working wisdom and beneficent skill, that evidences His eternal power and Godhead, see nought but blind chance and the clashing of material atoms and some imaginary principle of natural selection.

But faith refuses to admit that the corporeal senses are the sole test of truth, or that the invisible and intangible is therefore non-existent and unreal. Without abridging the range or efficacy of physical causation, without in any wise setting aside the existence or the properties of created things, it nevertheless sees in all, pervading all, upholding and controlling all, the author and the end of all, the divine, eternal spirit; a God who hides Himself, but who nevertheless works all things after the counsel of His own will, our gracious God and Saviour.

But while the God of creation thus hides Himself in his works so that many fail to recognize His being altogether and others have only vague, distant and inoperative notions of Him, and the eye of faith alone discerns Him there, how is it with those who strive to come into closer contact with the Most High, to establish intimate and personal relations between their souls and the Father of spirits, to enter into a devout and holy fellowship with God, which He permits, and even invites? Must we not here again confess that not only to the student of nature but likewise to His faithful and spiritual worshippers, He is a God that hideth Himself? The religious life is only maintained by the constant exercise of faith in the unseen. It completely transcends the domain of sense and bases itself on that which is spiritually apprehended. It derives its nourishment, its supports, its motives, its hopes, its rewards, its whole

being in fact, from Him whom no man hath seen or can see.

The worshipper in ancient Israel made his reverent approaches to the sanctuary to pay his homage to Him who had there recorded His awful name. He entered its court; he engaged in the prescribed ritual; he looked upon the sacred structure which Jehovah made His dwelling; but he was not permitted to enter it. The veil was closely drawn which shrouded all within from view. In the innermost chamber of that temple, in the thick darkness of the most holy place, the holy of holies, God dwelt unseen and unapproachable. The Israelite was admitted to the outer court; into the secret place of the divine abode he could not penetrate. The very construction of the temple taught him that the God he served was a God who had hidden Himself from sight; to whom he might draw near in the offering of worship, but whom he could not see. There was no answering voice to his petitions. No fire came forth from the sanctuary to consume his sacrifice and assure him of its acceptance. No radiant glory beamed forth to display the presence of the Deity ever resident within. And yet, to believing souls, God was there; His ineffable presence overshadowed the worshippers, filling them with holy awe; they met with God; they found Him propitious, gracious, forgiving; they came away pardoned, purified and blessed. It was a real transaction; but it belonged to the sphere of faith, not of outward sense.

And thus in the more spiritual exercises of Christian worship. How we would value some outward token of divine acceptance, some spoken word or visible sign assuring us that our prayers are heard, that the pardon we implore is vouchsafed to us, that needed grace will be supplied. If some bright messenger from the skies could stand by us, as by Cornelius, with a like glad and gracious message. Or if Gabriel could wing his way swiftly to us, as to Daniel, and our petitions be interrupted, before they are concluded, by a heavenly response. But no angel comes; no voice of God is heard. Do our earnest supplications really reach the ear of the Lord God of Hosts, or are they uttered into the empty air?

If some palpable result invariably and promptly followed, which we could trace to God's immediate agency and associate it with our act of worship, it would be an unspeakable relief. If our hearts were always stirred within us by a divine affluence, as we seek to draw nigh to God. If we were always conscious at such times of a new spiritual fervor, which melted us to penitential sorrow, produced a glow of grateful emotion, lifted us into a holy rapture or soothed us into a sweetly peaceful frame, we might feel that we had in this a sensible proof of God's presence and favor. But we would be in imminent danger of making our trust in God dependent on our own variable sensations and states of mind.

We should place our confidence in God and in His word, because He is in Himself worthy of all confidence, the solid, immovable rock of ages, the foundation which never can be shaken; and, though heaven and earth shall pass away, one jot or tittle shall not pass from all that He has declared. But, if our faith in God is maintained because we have the independent evidence of sense to the truth of His declarations; if we rely upon His promises, because we find these promises ever fulfilling themselves in our present experience, what is there to test the reality and the strength of our faith in God's word, where that word stands simply and alone? Will we believe God, or must we have something additional to lean upon, something that shall corroborate His word and make it credible to us? Must we have the support of outward sense, or of our inward feelings before we can venture to depend on what He has said, who is eternal truth? Can we trust Him blindfolded and in the dark, or must we first see for ourselves that it is and how it is and why it is, before our conviction can be carried by a "Thus saith the Lord?"

He demands our implicit, unreserved, unreasoning faith. Infinite wisdom, infinite holiness, infinite power, infinite grace and love certainly deserves to be trusted. And what can our poor, weak, erring reason and feeble sense do but to submit unconditionally to such guidance? If God says it, it is true. If God enjoins it, it is right, no matter what sense or reason may suggest to the contrary. This absolute submission of ourselves with implicit confidence to the guidance of the Most High is a fundamental requisite of true discipleship. It is unto this that He is training us. This is the design of all His dealings with us. And hence it is that God hides Himself and shrouds His purposes and His acts in mystery as He does.

He never said to the House of Jacob, seek ye My face in vain. He says ask and ye shall receive: seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened to you. Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out. The truth of these promises is not dependent on our

changing spiritual frames. They are not rendered more worthy of our confidence by our being in an elevated state of feeling. They are not discredited because we are dull and depressed. If we really come to the Saviour and take Him at His word, we shall not be rejected nor our suit refused. The want of lively affections and sensible spiritual joys is no reason why we should write bitter things against ourselves and conclude that God has in anger shut up His tender mercies. The basis of our confidence is not in ourselves but in Him; whether we are in the darkness or in the light, whether we are joyful or joyless, the foundation of God standeth sure; His word of promise cannot fail.

III. God hides Himself likewise in His providential dispensations. The unequal distribution of good and evil in the world is one of the inexplicable mysteries connected with His moral government. Why an infinitely holy God should have permitted sin in His universe at all is one of those insoluble problems with which men have vainly vexed their minds from the beginning. But when sin had entered the world, it might have been supposed that it would everywhere lie under the evident brand of the Divine displeasure. When marked judgment does overtake evil-doers it meets the approval of our sense of right; and we say that it is the finger of God. And yet these signal instances of just award are deprived of much of their impressiveness by the contrary cases in which an opposite rule appears to hold. If it be maintained, as is indeed the case, that the general tendency of things betrays a deeply seated moral order in the universe, whose natural workings bring a reward to virtue and punishment to vice, this is liable to so many exceptions and such counter influences that it would seem practically to have fallen into utter derangement and confusion. The impunity accorded to transgressors emboldens them in crime. Wicked men prosper, and prosper by reason of their very villainies and wicked deeds. The machinery of public justice itself is perverted to screen evil-doers and to oppress the just. Power is accumulated in the hands of unworthy men, who use it to further their selfish or nefarious designs. So that there are those who conclude that things are just allowed to take their course with no Divine superintendence or control; and they ask: Where is the God of judgment? and where is the promise of His coming? And good men are sorely puzzled and distressed oftentimes by the prevalence of these disorders, and their faith and constancy are severely tried, while they are obliged to confess, verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself.

The Most High gives no account to us of His sovereign dealings; and it would be presumptuous for creatures to claim that they can remove the mystery of His ways, or uncover the secret reasons of His acts. But one fact lies upon the surface and is obvious to every reflecting mind. It is that God's temporary and partial concealment of Himself answers an important end in the moral training and discipline of men. While effectually retaining His grasp upon the control of human affairs and affording sufficient indications to those who are careful to observe them of that ultimate award of righteousness which is in reserve, He yet so withdraws Himself from sight that a moral probation becomes possible. Coercion cannot develop the highest style of character. Virtue is something more than doing what is right with an eye to the consequent reward, or shunning evil from a dread of the penalty it incurs. If Divine retribution promptly followed every act, the consequences of our conduct would stand before us ever in such terrible relief that moral motives would have small chance to operate. There could be little freedom of choice under the pressure of such alternatives. And hence God hides Himself in order that He may subject men to such a course of training that they may become a law unto themselves, and learn of themselves to choose the good and refuse the evil without being driven by external constraints: that a vigorous virtue may be developed which shall gain force by being obliged to resist temptation and maintain itself against adverse and opposing influences; that the real character of men may be tested and they be allowed to disclose what they truly are; and that there may be room for the cultivation of that heartfelt reverence for God and submission to His authority that will delight to do His will from a sentiment of inward loyalty though no apparent reward would follow, and in the face even of loss and suffering and reproach.

But it is perhaps in the afflictive dispensations of God's providence that most distress is felt, and most perplexity created by His hiding Himself as he does. His people are not infrequently tempted in the severity of their trials to imagine that God has forgotten them, or that what they suffer betokens the fierceness of His displeasure. In the dark labyrinth of human life it is impossible for us now to compre-

hend in all its intricacies and devious windings the way by which we are led. One thing is evident to us, that we cannot intelligently choose our own course. We cannot divine the issue of the various paths that open before us. We cannot wisely or with due regard to our true welfare do other than submit ourselves to the guidance of our Divine Leader. In our ignorance of the future, in our ignorance of the real meaning and effect of what is now taking place, in our ignorance of what we most need or what will be the best for us, we cannot select our own lot. We cannot presume to take the conduct of affairs into our own hands and prescribe to the Infinite Intelligence. Our wisdom is to commit all into His hands for the present and for the future; to let Him order our pathway for us, whether it be in joy or sorrow, in sunshine or in storm, amid flowery vales or over rugged steeps, and to do this not only by painfully schooling ourselves to a reluctant resignation, but cheerfully, trustfully owning that He doeth all things well, learning to know no will but His, rejoicing to be at His disposal, and content with the assurance that what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

How changed will all the experiences of our earthly life appear when we look back upon them from the life beyond. When the process is at length ended by which the ransomed soul is prepared for glory, and God's gracious design is fully accomplished, how gratefully will we acknowledge the Infinite skill with which the whole work of love was conducted. The ore is violently wrenched from its native bed in the rock and melted in the furnace, and crushed in the rolling mill, and hammered in the forge, and cut and shaped, and polished and engraved to bring forth an exquisite piece of workmanship to be admired and prized and fit for valuable uses, and when it is at last finished it appears that all these violent measures which were employed upon it were not for its injury or destruction, as an unpractised observer might have imagined, nor were they capriciously or aimlessly performed. Every successive act from first to last was necessary and contributed its share toward the production of the final result. If any one had been omitted, or had been negligently and slightly done, the work would have been marred. And shall we complain of that divine and holy violence with which the great Master Workman is refining our earthborn souls, and is moulding and polishing and decorating them and stamping them with His own heavenly impress, that they may be vessels meet for the upper sanctuary, and there displayed as masterpieces of celestial skill to the glory of Him who designed and who perfected them? Can we shrink from the application to ourselves of any process than can bring forth such results out of such unpromising materials? With what glad amazement will the redeemed look upon what has been accomplished in themselves, exclaiming as they survey the past and the present, "Verily Thou art a God that hidst Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

IV. The Lord further hides Himself in His relations to His Church, which is His mystical body, and He its invisible though ever present head. He dwells in His Church by His spirit. It is ransomed by His death, sanctified by His grace, supplied by Him with spiritual strength. It is His instrument for the subjugation of the nations to the faith of the gospel; and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. But when we turn from this view of the ideal Church, the Church as it should be, to the Church as it actually is and as seen, how strange the contrast! Where is the holiness, and unity and power of the Church of the Living God? Can this be the body of the Lord, in which there is so much corruption and weakness and dissension, so many departures from the truth of God as set forth in His revealed word, so much deadness, formality and worldliness, so little of the life of God, so little aggressive power?

Is it surprising that the world fails to see the Church in its true light, or to recognize the divinity of its origin and its mission or its rightful claims? It is surprising that the Church itself does not seem to have a conception of its own high character? To the eye of sense it is merely a body of ordinary men subject to like infirmities and limitations. Persecutors have thought to make it their helpless prey. Kings and governments have thought to make it the instrument of their pleasure or to exclude it from their dominions. Infidels have thought by argument, ridicule or vituperation to destroy it root and branch. They who are most disposed to treat it with consideration and respect concede to it whatever is due to the nobility of its aims, and the excellence and worth of those within its pale, but judge of it as a purely human society that is simply what its members make it to be. And the Church itself, how often has it been turned aside from its true character and its heavenly aims to court the favor of the great ones of the earth or to seek worldly aggrandizement and

power, or shrunk from the unflinching declaration of the whole counsel of God because its doctrines grated on men's ears or offended the popular taste. How has it, forgetful of its spiritual mission and high destiny, relaxed its zeal and labors for the honor of its Lord and the salvation of the world. Or, unmindful of the divine citadel of its strength, surveyed with pride its numbers and the outward resources at its command, as though its ability to achieve success rested upon these. Or swaying to the opposite extreme of dejection because of its own incapacity, despaired of present results, looking to some future dispensation to accomplish what she is bidden and by faith might be enabled to accomplish now.

And yet the words of Jesus hold good—"Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world. The Church is His. He is working in it and through it, and shall achieve on its behalf and by its instrumentality all that He has declared. Only He hides Himself from the natural sight. He suffers the bush to be in the flames, apparently on the point of being consumed; nevertheless it is not burned. He employs the foolishness of preaching to save the world. He places the celestial treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be shown to be of God and not of us. He stains the pride of human greatness and glory by choosing the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not to bring to nought things that are.

Let Zion but awake to a sense of her true dignity and character, and put her faith in Him who hides Himself in the midst of her with unswerving loyalty to the purity of His truth and the integrity of His word, and it would be as when Samson awoke from his sleep and tore himself free from the bonds which the treacherous arts of Delilah had woven around him. The secret of her strength is yet untouched. That word shall yet be fulfilled that one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. The Lord, who is within her, is mightier than all her foes.

And it is with each member of the Church as it is with the Church at large. He has the promise of the Lord's presence with him in all that he does and in all that he plans for his own spiritual growth and for the advancement of Christ's kingdom; His grace to sustain, His wisdom to guide, His power to enable him, His watchful providence to protect, His infinite resources to supply all his need. God will be all in all. What can be added to assurances such as these? It might be supposed that the child of God would have nothing to do but to go forward in a plain path, free from all doubt and discouragement, and that difficulties would vanish, obstacles be overcome and all foes fall before him; that he would march on from victory unto victory in one unbroken series of triumphs and successes.

Ah, how soon and how sorely is he undeceived. He finds himself in perplexity and embarrassments, not knowing which way to turn. He meets unexpected repulses. His plans are thwarted. Things issue very differently from what he had anticipated. He sees no fruit, or little fruit from long and faithful labor. His spirits sink. Where is his promised helper?

God has hidden Himself here again. He has not forsaken His servant. He is only leading him by a way that He knows not. God works for him, by working in him and through him. He does not supply a guidance which shall make your own careful deliberation superfluous, but which in the exercise of an enlightened judgment shall lead you to right conclusions. He does not relieve you from the necessity of putting forth your best endeavors; but at the same time teaches you your dependence on Himself for counsel and strength. He opens a path before you, but it may be a tangled and a rugged path, through which you can only make your way with difficulty and in which you can see but a single step at a time. You may have to put down your foot in hesitation and much trembling; not knowing always what is wise, perhaps not in every case what is duty. But God is thus training you to walk by faith; and out of what you thus do in self-distrust and fear God will in due time bring forth His own appointed results, and at the end all will be made plain.

V. But I remark in the last place that God still hides Himself, even when He makes the amplest disclosures and confers the largest benefits. To whatever extent He makes Himself known, the revelation is but partial, and far more is kept in reserve than is shown forth. However rich and abundant His gifts may at any time be, He has still larger surprises in store for the recipients of them. We can never reach the limits of the grace and goodness of our blessed Lord. It is a boundless expanse, stretching away

on every side; and however we may advance in any direction, the horizon nevertheless outruns us. All that we have ever discovered or can discover is as nothing to that which lies yet beyond. The soul that is most abashed at the sense of its own littleness and unworthiness, and is most overwhelmed by the experience of God's amazing and unmerited goodness, has but stepped upon the threshold of the Palace Beautiful, has received but a first instalment in the long reversion of God's unimaginable grace. He is prepared to do, and will do, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. The law of His bestowment is: "To him that hath shall more be given, and he shall have abundance." All the rich experience of the past, all the expectations it has created, and all the imaginations built upon it, are perpetually outdone by new and more copious showers of blessing.

It is thus as the Christian advances from stage to stage in the life of God and the experience of divine mercy from the moment of his new birth till he has reached the highest attainments he shall make on earth. It is thus more signally still when he passes into the ineffable experience of Heaven, and there is suddenly opened before him what eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived. And yet even in the bewildering Brightness that is there poured around the raptured spirit of the beatified saint, God is nevertheless hiding Himself. He has not made known all that there is to disclose. There are ascending stages and fresh impartations and new gifts of yet more transcendent glory, surpassing and surpassing and surpassing all that has been before communicated. And as the ages of eternity roll on, there will be still more to be known and more to be possessed. The infinite must ever be infinite; and the incomprehensible must remain incomprehensible; so that in the very blaze of Heaven and under the sunlight of the throne, and to the most exalted capacities, it must still be true that all that God has disclosed of Himself is as nothing beside the undiscovered depths of His immeasurable being. And forever and forever more the confession of the heavenly hosts will re-echo the universal experience of this lower world: Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

EDUCATING MEN FOR THE MINISTRY.

METHODS ADOPTED TO DECREASE A DEBT—THE PRESSING NEED OF THIS BOARD.

Portland, Ore., May 19.—An abstract of the seventy-third annual report of the Board of Education presented to the General Assembly is given herewith: The only change in its membership during the past year was occasioned by the resignation of S. M. Haey and the election of J. W. Patton, to fill his place in the term which expires this year and by the election of R. M. Schick in place of Elder William Wood, who was appointed but declined to serve. It is recommended that these elections be approved by the Assembly. The former officers of the Board were continued, viz., the Rev. G. D. Baker, D. D., president; the Rev. J. M. Crowell, D. D., vice-president; the Rev. D. W. Poor, corresponding secretary, and Elder J. Wilson, treasurer.

In order to relieve itself from the embarrassments of the debt of \$16,000 which lay over from previous years three measures were adopted at the beginning of the year, viz.: 1. To reduce the appropriations for the current fiscal year, giving those of the higher grade \$80 instead of \$100 as heretofore; and the others \$70 instead of \$80 per annum. 2. If the state of the treasury at the end of the year permit, to add to each appropriation a sum that shall make it up as nearly as possible to the existing normal rate. 3. To drop from the roll of beneficiaries any students who may be found able to dispense with aid. It was determined also to decline the recommendations of all such as are denominated "special cases," i. e., those who are intending to take only a partial course of study and those who are in the academic department (the colored students excepted), save where strong reasons were presented for their acceptance.

Notwithstanding the limitations thus put on the reception of candidates, it is found at the close of the year that the number accepted was only nine less than

that reported last year, being in all 860. Those declined amount in all to fifty-eight. More would have applied had they not been deterred by the knowledge of the above mentioned restrictions. Some of these, it is to be feared, we have lost. Classified according to their nationality and race, 37 are Germans; 89 are negroes; 4 Bohemians; 4 Bulgarians; 1 Japanese; 1 Turk; 7 Mexicans; 1 Spaniard; 1 Brazilian; 3 Scandinavians; 2 Sioux Indians. The rest are Americans, Scotch, Irish and Dutch.

In the matter of finances, the Board reports a decided improvement. Owing in part to the arrangements at the beginning of the year, and in part to the more liberal responses from the churches to the appeals addressed to them individually, it has reduced the debt of \$16,000 one half, besides increasing the apportionments to the students \$10 apiece. Now if the ministers will continue to impress upon their churches the fundamental importance of the work of this board to every interest of the Church at large, and will labor to remove the fallacious objections which a superficial observation suggests against it, there will be no difficulty in removing the debt entirely next year, and enabling all our worthy candidates to fit themselves for service.

Another source of help has come from what has been styled the Gratitude Fund. To raise this, a movement was started early in the year by the Rev. W. C. Covert, of St. Paul's Park, Mich., to be made up of voluntary contributions from those who had been aided by the Board in the course of their education. In this movement the Board declined to take any part, even by the way of official approval. But of course it was glad to accept any offerings of the kind when freely tendered. Appeals were accordingly sent out by committees chosen from among the graduates of our theological seminaries to their fellow alumni beneficiaries; and these, it is a pleasure to state, have been generously responded to. A large number of letters have been received by the treasurer containing donations of various amounts and accompanied with very gratifying acknowledgments of their indebtedness to the Board, and of the pleasure felt in testifying to it. The sum thus contributed amounts to \$1,571, for which hearty thanks are rendered.

A careful calculation shows that within the bounds of our country there are in all 6,901 churches of every size, large and small, which need to be cared for. For supplying these we find, after deducting from the whole number of ministers on the roll the 403 who are honorably retired and the 356 who are engaged in educational work and the 338 who are foreign missionaries, that there are in all 4,189 in regular service, besides 930 who are unemployed, marked either W. C. or Ev. or are blank. How many of the latter class could be counted upon for regular service if they were called to it, it is impossible to tell. The usual estimate is about one-half. So that for ministering to 6,901 churches we can rely only upon 4,654 ordained men. It is not surprising, therefore, that 1,185 churches should be marked "Vacant." True it is that many of these are too weak to support a pastor, and several of them are cared for occasionally by a presbyterian missionary; yet after making all due allowances, it must be said that the surplus of vacant churches is altogether too large for the healthy condition of our ecclesiastical body. Still further it must be remembered that we have a steady accession going on to the number of our church, averaging not less than 144 annually. Nor should we leave out of the account the constant demand for men by the Foreign Mission Board.

To meet this demand our seminaries graduated this year 228 candidates. Of these it will be fair to say that about 200 can be counted upon to supply our