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— Sermons —

OUR NATIONAL LIFE.

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Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.—MATTHEW vi., 33.

IN considering the blessings of life we shall find that they may be roughly divided into two classes, corresponding to two great wants of man's nature. One class comprises those material things that minister to the bodily wants and lower appetites—as food, raiment, homes, property, power, etc. Another class is that which ministers to the wants of the soul—things that have value not in self-gratification, but are desired because they ennoble and purify the spirit.

Men set value on all their possessions and attainments by one or the other of these two standards. The energy with which men strive is imparted by the consideration that those things they seek will contribute either to their material welfare, or to their spiritual life. These are the two great ends of human activity. These are the two hemispheres that, taken together, make up the orb of human life. These are the two great fountains from which flow all motive in human conduct.

Let us consider these two aims of human life, first, in their relation to each other; secondly, as elements entering into our life as a nation; thirdly, as throwing light upon the future of our country.

inations in the city and at conference sessions and in visiting the leading churches of the denomination. As a preacher his style is inclined toward the metaphysical, but is deeply spiritual and always clear and aptly illustrated. His diction is choice but vigorous, and his delivery impassioned but forceful.

President Stephens is a man of broad, deep sympathies and comprehensive grasp of intellect. He is getting a grip on the esteem and affections of the coming men of the Church which will make him a leader in ecclesiastical as well as educational affairs, though to the latter he does not aspire.

His position, however, of President of the leading institution of learning in the Methodist Protestant Church is a sufficient indication of the estimation in which he is held by that denomination. He has introduced several changes in the curriculum which have given him a foremost place among educators and which seem destined to make the college a rapidly increasing power. Among these changes are courses of lectures on character-build-

ing and a greater liberty of selection of studies than is usually permitted in the higher educational establishments. This freedom of selection President Stephens has found not only perfectly practicable but has also discovered that it caused the student to bring a purpose to his studies and to see a significance in his work that he could not have otherwise realized. The new departure assumes that more systematic and progressive methods, than those in general use, for preparing the student for the special work of his life, and for assisting in forming and establishing his character, can be worked out with the most satisfactory results. President Stephens has also a splendid opportunity to demonstrate in Adrian College, that the best intellectual development and the highest Christian culture can be secured, where the developed love of the good and the awakened sense of justice are relied upon as more potent safeguards to discipline than a multiplication of rules and restraints; and we believe he is equal to this task and will nobly discharge the trust committed to him.

✠ Leading Thoughts of Sermons ✠

God's Chosen Witnesses.

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Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servants whom I have chosen.—ISA. xliiii., 10.

Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins, and we are witnesses of these things, etc.—ACTS v., 31, 32.

Men bear for God two kinds of testimony, involuntary and voluntary.

I. The Jews were involuntary witnesses. They had "the law and the prophets" in their hands in the presence of the world. They gloried in this. But their formalism and worldliness prevented them from seeing the meaning of these oracles of God. They were called into court, as it were, by God, as we find in Isaiah, "Bring forth the blind that have eyes, and the deaf that have

ears;" "Let all nations be gathered" and confronted with these Hebrews. Who among the heathen can announce coming and far-distant events, or even show former things? But the Jews can. The law and prophets in their hands—books seven centuries old—declare the history of man from the creation and announce the Coming One—"My servant whom I have chosen"—seven centuries in advance. You Hebrews, God said by Isaiah (xliiii., 8), twenty-five hundred years ago—you Hebrews, "with eyes but seeing not," hold these books in your hands. "Ye are My" unconscious, involuntary "witnesses." So, He may say still. These Hebrews have, most tenaciously and often at the hazard of their lives, held fast these sacred volumes through all these centuries. Peeled and scattered over the earth, they have

guarded these documents while they have misread them; "a blind people that have eyes"—shrewd, far-seeing, and intelligent in all other matters, but perverse and ignorant in this, they have remained involuntary witness-bearers to the veracity and supremacy of God. About three years since, anxious to learn something of the condition of the Jews under Russian rule, I made a visit to Warsaw, where I found a good synagogue and in it saw a most beautiful copy of the Scriptures. Though suffering and much depressed "the book" occupies a high place among them and vividly illustrates the prophet's words in a land to him unknown and nearly nineteen centuries after the advent of the Messiah. These Jews are involuntary witnesses still for God, and still refuse while God calls, notwithstanding the peculiar and exclusive knowledge which God vouchsafed them.

II. Christians may be regarded as voluntary witnesses in a twofold capacity—as a Church and as individuals.

The Christian Church is an organization, and not a gathering as is a crowd in the street. It worships God according to His truth. The Church is organized because men have something in common. There may be mistakes in some of the creeds and formulas, but that does not invalidate its claim to stand up and be a witness for God. The Church is now on the witness-stand for God. Against Atheism asserting there is no God the Church proclaims "There is, and we know, worship and obey Him." Against paganism with its many gods, the Church testifies "The Lord our God is one Lord." Against many-faced infidelity denying that there is any revelation from God, if there is a God at all, the Church avers: "We have. God spake at sundry times and in various ways to the fathers by the prophets. In these last days He has spoken unto us by His Son." Against those who deny the manifestation of God in three persons, the Church keeps uttering its benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." Those who deny the necessity for any atonement may hear the Church declare, "The wages of sin is

death, but we have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins," and see her "showing forth His death till He come" in her holy communion.

To sceptics who scornfully ask "Where is the promise of His coming?" the Church testifies, "We wait for the Son of God from heaven. He will appear and then all mysteries will be solved."

To Romanists who assert that there are other mediators than Jesus, the Church proclaims "one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." False liberalism may say to the sinner "Be sincere and you need no more;" the Church echoes her Founder's words: "Except a man be born from above he cannot see the kingdom of heaven," and those of His beloved disciple, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Thus the Church proceeds with her testimony. If there are many particulars in the exhibit of her beliefs the fault is not hers. If she is surrounded with enemies she must erect forts and towers where the attack is made; in other words, formulate her testimony against the assaults of her foes.

In various other ways the Church is a witness for God. She becomes a witness for God by the amount of zeal and energy she shows in making known His truth to mankind. This is done through missions and missionaries, by the founding of Christian institutions, by schools and colleges, through which the great truths of Christianity reach all men. This work has always been in progress in that degree in which evangelical life has marked the Christian era, and this will increase in the years to come. As by the manners and appearance of children the characters of parents may be estimated, so the world regards the Church by the bearing of its professed members. If the latter lead consistent, blameless, charitable and humble lives, it must be said their faith amounts to something and their God must be a good father and beneficent teacher. We must have courage to work for God, courage to live the lives of Christians, and then, as His willing witnesses, we shall be elevated to that higher plane the world cannot supply.