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— Sermons —

IMMORTALITY.

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Because I live ye shall live also.—JOHN xiv., 19.

LIFE, death, eternity—how vast, how deep, how solemn these three words, so familiar to us all! Who can measure, who can fathom their meaning? In the midst of life we are surrounded by death and confronted by eternity with its boundless prospects of weal and woe. Life on earth ends in death, and death is but the dark door to another life which has no end. Astronomy cannot tell whether this visible universe has boundaries or not, and what lies beyond. Theology cannot determine the locality of that invisible universe from which no traveller returns, nor the direction and length of that lonely passage which carries the disembodied spirit from its present to its future abode. But this we do know—and it is enough for our comfort—that in our Father's house are many mansions, and that our Saviour has prepared a place for all His disciples. There is an abundance of room for all even within the limits of this universe, and for aught we know, the spirit world may be very near and round about us. There are exalted moments in our life when we see the heavens open and the angels of God descending and ascending. Life is a mystery, a glorious mystery with a heaven beyond, but a terrible mystery with annihilation or endless punishment in prospect.

The immortality of the soul is a universal instinct and desire of the

The Great Evidence of Christianity.

By MOSES D. HOGE, D. D., SECOND PRES-
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For this cause I bow my knee unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named, etc.—*EPH. iii., 14-21.*

You may remember that on one occasion a friend found Michael Angelo gazing, like one inspired, upon a shapeless block of marble. When he asked him why, the sculptor replied, "I am thinking of the imprisoned angel I am going to set at liberty." By ten thousand patient touches he accomplished his great design, and the angel released came forth in beauty to be admired by the world. In the text there is something better than the released angel—a depraved man renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost; transformed, not into the figure of an angel, but into the Divine image, made like Christ. This is the beauty and glory of this text. This is one proof of our holy religion not often enough insisted on. The Gospel alone of all religions proposes to regenerate men, and to make them new creatures.

I state only a historical fact when I say that in the time of the Cæsars the Apostles preached a new faith, grounding it upon the claim of the regeneration of mankind, and if that is true then Christianity differs from all other religions that ever existed, and in it a new beam of hope dawned upon the darkness of the world. Such being the claim of Christianity, I am not surprised when I look into the writings of such a man as Celsus to see that he asserts that no such religion can ever prevail, as it undertakes to regenerate the wicked, to make men over again, which is impossible. If it be impossible, then, indeed, must Christianity abandon its claims; but if it be possible, if again and again it has been done, then is Christianity divine.

Never was there a dialogue as short as that of Christ with Nicodemus that contained so much. Nicodemus was startled by the very fact that is contained in Celsus' proposition. "How," he exclaims, "can a man be born again when

he is old?" Very solemn is Christ's answer: "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God." On that fact, that the Gospel could regenerate mankind, was its Divine Founder willing to stake its claims.

Perhaps you recollect how the Christian fathers answered the infidel argument. They said: "Come into our assemblies and see whence we came; how the old hate and savagery have died out of our lives. Come and see how we recognize as our neighbor any one that needs our aid; how we forgive our enemies and do good to our persecutors. Come and see whether the Gospel has made transformations among us or not." It is simply a question of fact. If the Gospel can take depraved men and make them new creatures in Christ Jesus it shows itself to be worthy of its Divine Founder.

Then the question arises, Is it true that the Gospel does effect such transformations? Of that truth there is no better example than the author of the text. To see a man once filled with iusane fury against the followers of Jesus so transformed as to weep over the enemies of the Cross, so earnest in preaching the same Gospel he had hated that he ceases not to warn everyone with tears; this surely is a mighty evidence of the power of Christianity. How will you explain it otherwise, that a man who had labored to overthrow the altar should be so changed that he is ready to lay himself upon that altar, if need be, a willing sacrifice? How else will you explain it that he threw by all associations of his past, entered upon a life unparalleled, and went forth to girdle the world with light through his missionary labors. If Saul of Tarsus was not different from Paul the Apostle never was change wrought upon a human heart.

Can any man look back upon the history of the past and say that Clement, Jerome and Chrysostom of the golden mouth were not different from the educated and polite beathen of their times? That in modern times there was no difference between Mirabeau and Fenelon,

Tom Paine and Henry Martyn? Is there no difference between the confessions of Rousseau and the confessions of St. Augustine? I would rather be the author of one of Newton's hymns than of all Tennyson has written, greatly as I admire the poet laureate, and will any one say that those hymns were written by the same man that trod the deck of a slave ship and startled even his associates with his profanity? Will any one say that the same Bunyan whom a woman—not a good woman either—rebuked for his wickedness, stood upon the Delectable Mountains and lifted his eyes with rapture to the shining City of God?

I think this is a species of evidence of Christianity not enough insisted upon. I am thankful for all the evidences; for what theologians call the external and internal. Oh, I think it is a great thing when history, science, and philosophy all come up together to demonstrate truth! It is a great thing when thinkers and scholars lock their shields together to form a solid rampart round truth. It is something to be thankful for, when students of nature explore its wide fields and listen to its voices, that in all they may find new demonstration of the truth of the inspired work. But nothing is so convincing as the fact that Christianity is the only religion the world ever saw that professes to regenerate men and aims to bring the world back into harmony with God, just by the sanctification of the individual through the power of the Holy Ghost.

If anybody were to bring before you a piece of machinery your first inquiry would be, What do you propose to do with it? And should the inventor reply, To blow soap bubbles or fashion delicate wreaths of smoke, you would say it was not worth investigating. Macauley says that ancient philosophy was wholly speculative; modern philosophy is altogether practical. It demands proof, results; something of use. It is but fair and right that Christianity be subjected to the same rule. And I say this is its great distinctive claim—that it makes new men of those who accept the Gospel. It does more than release the imprisoned

angel. It brings out the likeness to the divine, so that renewed men and women walk forth the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

Paul has drawn that shining portrait, and shown how the lineaments are formed, and as he wrote, his heart, over-burdened with the glory of the picture, broke forth in prayer, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The whole family! How suggestive! I am thankful to think God has only one family in His wide universe. It is divided, indeed, into the Church militant on earth and the Church triumphant in heaven; but, glory be to God, it is one household.

"See how the apostle's thought struggles for expression. Not His glory" alone, but the "riches of His glory." Sometimes Paul's style seems confused, but it is not confusion; it is condensation. It is the great thought struggling for expression. The vines in the forest do not choke the great trees; they only drape them. Here, as Doré might have stepped back after drawing an outline to contemplate his work, so the apostle seems to consider his, and to begin at the beginning, recognizing the power of the Holy Ghost, and shaping his prayer into an entreaty that his beloved might be strengthened by the might of the Spirit in the inner man. We need that power, my friends, to teach us to understand the reality of the spiritual world. All things that we are commanded to pursue are unseen, and there Christianity is at a disadvantage; but if we could get but a glimpse of the white throne of judgment with the books beside it waiting to be opened; if we could see the glories flash along the battlements of the Heavenly City; if we could catch but an echo of the new song, or pluck but one flower or taste but one of the twelve manner of fruits—O, then we should come back with a deathless sense of the reality of things as yet unseen!

But now there is no revelation to the senses, and therefore are we in danger of pursuing the things that perish till we perish with them; unless our eyes are

opened, as were those of the young man who, at the prophet's word, beheld the horses and chariots of the Lord. Opening his eyes did not put them there. They were there before. Just so the opening of our eyes enables us to see the realities before unseen, and to go through life with the power of the world to come resting upon us. We are made strong. We grasp the truth, we feel the power of the truth, and that we cannot do unless we are "strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man." It is fashionable now to talk about doubt as if it were an indication of genius, and to question everything. Does doubt accomplish anything? Does doubt get anywhere?

"Our doubts are traitors
And make us lose the good we oft might win,
By fearing to attempt."

To doubt is weakness. Man is strong in proportion to the depth and strength of his convictions, so that there is philosophy as well as theology in the apostle's prayer that the inner man may be strengthened with might by the Divine Spirit, that Christ may dwell in the heart by faith. On that faith the apostle builds his structure. Faith is the vine on which grow all the clusters of the Christian graces—Love, a purple cluster, fragrant and sweet; Peace, throwing its perfume on the air; Joy, sparkling as with dew; Humility, clad in russet; Hope, upon the topmost bough, cheering the heart like wine, catching the first beams of the sun; Faith, that Christ may dwell in us! It is a great thing to have Christ with us; a great thing to have Christ for us, but it is a better thing to have Christ dwelling in us—like one at home. If that be true of us, we can say with the apostle, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

True Freedom.

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And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall
make you free.—JOHN viii., 32.

Three mighty words are emphasized in the text—know, truth, free. Three great thoughts are given us by the Master—knowledge, truth, freedom. All knowledge is of the truth. All knowledge of

the truth results in freedom. There is no true freedom except that which comes of the knowledge of the truth.

Men claim to be "free-born," others attain to freedom at a great price; yet he who sins is the slave of sin. Political freedom is but the bark, intellectual freedom but the fibre, of the tree spiritual; freedom is the sap. Men contend for bark and fibre. Christ gives the sap, and that takes to itself a body and expresses its life.

Sometimes we have a political freedom, so far as men can give it, but lifeless, sapless, formal, not real, as dead as telegraph poles strung with the wires of politicians.

In Ps. cv., 17, we read: "Joseph was sold for a servant; his feet were hurt with fetters, he was laid in iron;" but even there he was free, for "God was with him." "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." It was but a step from the prison to the palace, but an hour between the fetters about the limbs, and the chain about the neck. Joseph was as free in the dungeon as on the throne.

Moses led a nation into the desert—the Red Sea covered their fetters; the pillar of fire destroyed their masters; the song of Miriam chanted their freedom; they were out of Egypt, but Egypt was not out of them. Calf worship was in the blood; at the foot of the mount that could not be touched, the gold and silver that stood for the wages of four centuries of bondage went into the fire and came out shaped by the Egyptian slavery in the veins. The desert became the burial ground of a nation of slaves instead of the highway to liberty. With the world in which to roam they were bound to the throne of the Pharaohs by bonds they could not break.

Every week thousands come to the shores of this "land of the free" from the ends of the earth, but the touch of the shore and the breathing of the air does not free them from the ignorance and prejudice of the Old World. A few, like Lazarus, are freed by the hands of education from the cement of the dead past; but many, like Lot's wife, die between