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SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AUGUSTA, GA., DECEMBER 4TH, 1861,
AT THE OPENING OF THE FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA; BY THE REV. BENJAMIN M. PALMER, D. D.

FATHERS AND BRETHREN:—This Assembly is convened under circumstances of unusual solemnity, and any one of us might well shrink from the responsibility of uttering the first words which are to be spoken here. I see before me venerable men whom the church of God has honored with the highest mark of her confidence—men venerable for their wisdom, no less than for their age—who should, perhaps, as your organ, speak to-day in the hearing of the nation and of the Church. But a Providence which I have had no hand in shaping seems to have devolved upon me this duty, as delicate as it is solemn. It only remains for me to bespeak your sympathy, and to implore the divine blessing upon what I may be able to say from the concluding words of the 1st chapter of Ephesians :

“And gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church; which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all is all.” Ephesians, chap. 1, vs. 22, 23.

You have often admired in the Epistles of Paul the vigor of his inspired and sanctified logic; driving, like a wedge, through the complications of the most perplexed reasoning to its very heart. Not less wonderful is that intellectual comprehensiveness, which, stretching across the breadth of a zone, gathers up all the indirections of his theme, and lays them over upon it in rapid and cumulative utterances—till language begins to break beneath the weight of his thought; and the arguments, set on fire with the ardor of his emotion, reaches the goal a perfect pyramid of flame. The passage just recited is a sufficient example of this rare combination of the discursive with the severely logical in the writings of this great Apostle; for the grand thoughts it presents are nevertheless gathered up by the way, and wrought into the texture of his discourse by incidental allusion. Having first traced the calling and salvation of these Ephesian Christians to its source in the free and gracious love of God, through which they were chosen in Christ; and having unfolded the method of grace, by redemption through his blood, he pauses that he may lift them to some adequate conception of the privileges into which they have been introduced. This, however, he attempts not through cold and didactic exposition, but in the language of prayer, burning throughout with a holy and earnest passion: “that the eyes of their understanding may be enlightened, to know what is the hope of their calling, what the riches of the glory of their inheritance,” and what the almightiness of the power by which they have been transformed from sinners into saints. Then as if to give some external measure of that power, he points them to the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, in which their own spiritual renovation is implicitly contained. Kindling with the grandeur of his theme growing thus by the accumulation of way-side suggestions, he heaps together in rapid description these phrases burdened with the glory of that Headship which belongs to this risen Saviour, and the honors of that Church standing to Him in such august relations; till even Paul, with his inspired logic all on fire, can say nothing more than that she is “His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” The power of human speech is exhausted in this double utterance; and silence lends its emphasis to the unspoken thoughts which no dialect beneath that of the Seraphim may express. Who of us, my brethren, has not been stunned by this holy vehemence of Paul, as he piles together his massive words; each bursting with a separate wealth, and revealing the agony of language in uttering the deep things of God? What resource have we, but to halt at the articulations of his text—until, stored with their digressive sweets, we return to follow the wheels of his chariot as it bounds along the great

highway of his discourse? Such an excursus I now propose to you: for no theme occurs to me more suited to the solemnity of this occasion, than *the supreme dominion to which Christ is exalted as the Head of the Church, and the glory of the Church in that relation as being at once His body and His fulness.*

The testimony of Scripture is given with great largeness to this Headship of Christ. In this immediate connexion, Paul affirms that He is "set at the Father's own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things." Eph. 1: 20-23. Again, in Philippians: "wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2: 9-11. What enumeration can be more exhaustive, and what description more minute, of the universality and glory of this dominion? In like manner, we read in the prophetic record the testimony of Daniel: "I saw in the night-visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him; and there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Dan. 7: 13, 14. The Evangelical Isaiah, too, lifts up the voice of the ancient Church: "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even forever." Isa. 9: 6, 7. Our Lord Himself asserts His claim of universal empire and founds upon it the great commission of the Church: "All power is given unto me in Heaven and upon earth—go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." Mat. 28: 18, 19. Finally, the lonely Seer on Patmos turns his telescopic gaze into the Heavens, and reveals the Grand Assembly in their solemn worship around the throne, "and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, and every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, blessing and honor and glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Rev. 5: 11, 13. Such is the testimony of prophecy, both as it begins, and as it closes the sacred canon.

Observe, however, of whom all this is affirmed. It is not alone of the Eternal Word which dwelt in Christ; nor yet alone of the man Jesus, in whom that Word was made flesh—but of the Christ, in whom these two natures meet and are indissolubly united. So that we are compelled to look upon both the terms of this complex person before we can apprehend the nature and the greatness of this supremacy. We shall discover reasons in both for the sublime agency assigned to Him as "the whole creation's Head." Looking, then, upon the divine side, it is obvious,

1. *That all the perfections of God are indispensable to the fulfilment of this amazing trust.* Recurring to the passages already quoted, this Headship clearly includes universal conservation and rule. The whole administration of Providence and Law, over matter and over mind, is delegated to this Head; who cannot therefore, be a mere creature, lacking the first attributes necessary to the

execution of his task. Suppose the universe of matter to be created; yet is it throughout, from the atom to the mass, senseless and inert. The mechanical forces pent up within its gigantic frame, slumber in a repose deep as that of death, until evoked and put in play by the operative will of the Great Designer: and the constant pressure of the same external will is the secret power by which the wheels and pistons of the blind machine are driven.

Proudly as science may descant upon the laws of nature which it is her province to explore, they are at last but the formulas into which our knowledge, drawn from extended observation, is generalized. It were sad if reason should be deceived by the pompous phraseology, which often serves but as the cover for that ignorance it is too proud to confess. These physical laws are but records of facts inductively classified, not producing causes to which these facts owe existence. They are only statements of the modes through which Nature is seen to work, and not the secret power to which that working is due. Providence stands over against creation thus as its correlate; precisely the same energy being required in *the continuing*, which was first put forth in *the producing*. The agent, then, to whom this administration of Providence is assigned, must possess the attributes of God. His influential presence must pervade all nature, upholding its separate parts, balancing its discordant forces, adjusting in exact proportions its constituent elements, reconstructing it amidst constant change—its omnipotent and supporting Head.

The same is true in the domain of mind. Myriads of beings, for example, have pressed this globe, each of whom has a history of his own, and each history a separate thread in the great web of Providence. The slenderest of them may not be drawn, without a rent in the general tissue. The tiniest babe, that wakes but for a moment to an infant's joy, and then closes its eyes in sleep forever, was born for a purpose, though born but to die. But see these countless units as they are massed together in society, compacted into States, and living under government and law. What complications are here, to be mastered by Him who is placed as Head over all! Alas! the best statesmanship of earth breaks down in the management even of its subdivided trusts. Contingencies it had not the wisdom to foresee, and too stubborn for control, bring its counsels to naught; and the web so patiently woven by day, is unravelled in the night. What creature, then, may aspire to the premiership of the universe? As the thought ranges upward from the earth through the grand hierarchy of the skies, who among the creatures can take the scale of such an empire, grasp the law which angels and seraphim obey, weave the destinies of all into one historic conclusion, and draw it up finished and entire before the Judgment Throne? Just here, then, in the attributes of His Godhead, we discern the competency of Christ to be the Head over all things; equal to the statesmanship of the universe, in the perfect administration of a perfect law.

Thus far we have pressed up to the Divinity of Christ, but not to His personal distinction in the Godhead as the only begotten of the Father. I remark then, 2, *That this agency is suitably assigned to Him as the middle person of the adorable Trinity, by whose immediate efficiency all things were created.* We may not too curiously pry into the mystery of this plural subsistence in the Godhead, revealed to us as the object of faith rather than as the subject of speculation. Unquestionably, God is infinitely blessed and glorious in the ineffable fellowship of these persons as well as in the unity of His being. But as these personal distinctions have their ground in that singleness of nature, they must equally concur in all the external operations of the Deity; and so the scriptures variously ascribe the works of creation, providence and grace to each respectively. In this there is no contradiction; since they are assigned comprehensively to all in their unity, and distributively to each in their separateness. However unable we may

be to trace the grounds of that distribution, they must be found in the reciprocal relations of those persons in the mystery of the Godhead. Certainly the scriptures, however they may generally refer the work of creation to God absolute, as clearly assert the special intervention of the second person as its immediate author. Paul, speaking of the Son whom God "hath appointed heir of all things," adds, "by whom he also made the worlds."—Heb. 1 : 2. John in the opening of his Gospel, declares with emphasis of the Word that "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made."—John 1 : 3. And in Colossians, "by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him—and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."—Col. 1 : 16, 17. If then in the outworking of this mighty plan, the control and government of all created things should be delegated to an agent who must possess the attributes of the Almighty, which of the sacred three may occupy this trust more suitably than He who in the economy of the Godhead executively and directly brought all things into being? Who shall more perfectly grasp the design of creation than He who articulately wrought it out in all its parts? Who shall better gather up all things into himself as the centre and the head, and administer that Providence which is but the continuation of the creative energy which he first put forth?

Unsearchable as the mystery of God's being doubtless is, three facts are certainly revealed to us: the unity of the Divine essence, a three-fold distinction of persons in the same, and a certain order between them by which the second is *from* the first; not posterior in time, but second in the sequence of thought. It would seem to be a consequence of this personal characteristic of the Son, as being *from* the Father, that the total revelation of God, whether by word or work, should be through him. Thus a ground may exist in the eternal relationship of these persons for referring the works of creation, providence and grace, distributively to the first in the way of final authority, and to the second in the way of executive production. The Father who is before all, shall hold in His august keeping, the eternal thought which drafts the mighty plan. The Son, by virtue of His personal distinction as *from* the Father, shall produce the thought, lifting it up from the abyss of the infinite mind and revealing it to the creatures. Thus the Son is also the Word; the one title being descriptive of His personal relation in the Godhead, and the other of His office as the revealer flowing from the same. Hence Christ says: "no man hath seen the Father, save He which is of God; He hath seen the Father."—John 6 : 46. And again the Evangelist John affirms, "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him."—John 1 : 18. In like manner, as the Son is from the Father, so in turn the Holy Spirit is from them both; and he who holds the middle place in this sacred triplet looks upon the first for those archetypal thoughts which he shall render into concrete facts, and then upon the third whose concurrent agency shall breathe life and order and beauty into the works of His hands. As therefore in Christ's divinity we discover the resources, so again in His personal distinction as the Son we trace the ultimate reason of this universal Headship.

But let us turn from thoughts too high for us, to contemplate the *human* aspect of His person. For if the power to wield this empire vests in Him as God, no less does the form of that jurisdiction depend upon a true participation in the nature of those to whom He is the head. I may open this topic in three particulars:

1. *By His incarnation He has virtually embraced all the grades of being lying between the extremes of the scale.* The peculiar distinction of man is through his mixed composition to be the middle link of the whole creation. As to his body, he is of the earth, earthy; as to his soul, celestial and God-like.

How wonderful his bodily organization, of so many parts, and so wisely adjusted! the most singular feature of all being that the presence of an indwelling, actuating soul is the indispensable condition of its physical life. The two are distinct, yet their co-operation necessary. The anatomist can trace the impressions upon the skin with its fine tissues, and the transmission of these along the nerves to the brain, the seat of all sensation. But science will never perfect her methods so as to step from that brain to the mind which uses it as an organ, and thus explain to us the birth of a single thought. By means of the body, the soul comes forth and takes possession of a world which is foreign to itself; and man connects them both by their mysterious union in himself. So far as our knowledge extends, he is the only being who unites these contradictions; thus fitted by his very organization, he was placed by his Maker in Paradise the head of the lower creation. In token of this supremacy, the beasts receive from him their baptismal names, and express their allegiance to God's vice-regent upon the earth. As the high Priest of nature, he must give articulate voice to her silent praise, and gather up in his censer the incense of a universal worship. Such was the glory of man's primeval state. Himself a Microcosm, summing together in the perfection of his animal frame all the properties of the material creation, and by the union of spirit bridging the awful gulf of separation between the two. Christ now according to Scriptures sinks through the entire scale of intelligent beings till He comes to man: "for verily, he took not on him the nature of Angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham."—Heb. 2: 16. The two poles of being are thus brought together in Him; of being, as it is in God, self-existent and eternal, and of being, as it is in man, dependent and derived. In the sweep of his descent he gathers up all the intervening grades, and finds in man at the bottom of the scale a nature which links all the forms of creaturely existence within itself. Thus in the incarnation he lays a broad foundation for his Headship, establishing through it a relation to the creatures by which they may be recapitulated in Him as their centre and their rest.

2. *The human title of Christ to this Headship is grounded upon that perfect obedience by which He magnified the law.* If we are overwhelmed by the condescension of the Son in stooping to become man, not less amazing is the counterpart to this in the exaltation of man to this universal Headship. The incarnation lays, so to speak, a *physical* basis for this delegated rule, by allying Him in nature with the creature; but there must exist some *moral* ground for this apparent inversion, which transfers man from the bottom to the top of the scale.

All the terms which define a created moral being, imply his subjection under law. The faculties of understanding, conscience and will with which he is endowed, must find their scope in relations which are determined and regulated through a law. What the air is to the lungs, the law is to will; it creates the moral atmosphere, through which all the powers of the soul find their activity and play. Even Christ, in the assumption of our nature, was not exempt from this inexorable condition; for "God sent forth His son made of a woman, made under the law." Gal. iv: 4—"being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death."—Phil. ii: 8. How then shall His humanity lift itself above the law, executively to administer it, dispensing on either hand its blessing and its curse? The explanation is immediately furnished in the passage last cited. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him."—Because of this "obedience unto death, even the death of the cross;" "a name is given Him which is above every name; at which every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth."—Phil. ii: 9, 10. In no way conceivable shall the man Jesus be lifted to this supremacy, but by rendering a service to the law, commensurate with its dignity, and to which this exaltation shall be an equal reward. The mere assumption of humanity by the Logos doubtless invests it with a sublime worth.

and imparts to the acts done by it an infinite value. But the natural basis thus laid for Headship is quite another thing from the moral reason for appointing it. If, however, the work done in that nature shall be a work of support to the law itself, more conspicuously revealing its majesty and sustaining it against all possible impeachment—if it shall heal the dreadful breach which sin has made, and discover the love of God in the very assertion of His justice—if, in the language of the Prophet, it shall “magnify the law and make it honorable,” and be a lesson of holiness which the Angels themselves shall study: we may then conceive that, to bring out these grand results in more open view, God may place the administration of this law in the hands of that being who has pre-eminently honored it; and install over the whole creation one who is fitted by His double nature to be its head. Yet the hypothesis I have suggested, is only a faint outline of the work actually achieved by our incarnate Lord. Who can hope to condense into a paragraph the glories of that obedience by which He has forever magnified the law? An obedience glorious in its perfect voluntariness; not only as being willingly rendered, but as being optional whether it shall be undertaken. An obedience glorious in being distinctly offered to the precept and the penalty—thus covering the whole area of law and exhausting its contents; a characteristic difference between the obedience of Christ and of all other beings throughout the universe. An obedience glorious as shut up within a limit, bounded within a period—so that Christ could testify in the hearing of heaven and earth, “it is finished;” not like the obedience of mere creatures, ever continuing, but finished and entire; nothing to be added to it—nothing to be taken from it, and borne into the chancery of Heaven as the plea for the sinner’s discharge. An obedience glorious through the Hypostatic union, which brings the splendors of His deity to illumine the acts of His humanity. If Moses break the tables of stone at the foot of the Mount, behold one greater than Moses descending after him to gather up the broken fragments, cementing them with his blood, and pouring the rays of His divine glory upon the restored tablet, until every letter beams with light above the brightness of the sun. Well may the cherubim bend their gaze between their extended wings upon this repaired law reposing forever within the ark of the covenant. The transcendent worth of this obedience, as sustaining the majesty of God’s law and upholding the integrity of the Divine Government, is signalized by placing Him who wrought it over the whole creation; and it becomes the title by which this supremacy is held as His mediatorial reward.

3. *In this Headship are blended the two methods of law and grace, by which God reveals His moral perfections.* Beyond a doubt, the law was the original medium through which God’s nature was disclosed to the creature; and it would not be difficult to show that His glory is stamped upon every feature of it. Indeed, springing out from the bosom of His nature, it not only asserts the claims of God and determines the duties of the creature, but it so transcribes and discovers the excellence of the Divine Being that the creature’s obedience rises at once into the solemnity of worship. For the same reason, the law is generically *one* throughout the universe. Having its foundation in the nature of one God, it is essentially one over angels and men; modified only in its details to suit the different relations in which these different classes are placed. It is noticeable moreover that this law finds its majesty vindicated in both its grand divisions through the separate destiny assigned to two separate orders of beings; the holy Angels, through their constant obedience, historically illustrating the glory of law as found in its precepts; and apostate Angels, through constant endurance of its penalty. Such ample provisions has God made for securing a revenue of praise through the wisdom of His law. Last of all, in compensation of the stupendous service by which its majesty has been upheld, the administration thereof has been committed to the Mediator, and is brought

to a conclusion at the day of Judgment, when He shall sit upon the throne of His glory. Thus by a method of pure law, the sun-light of Jehovah's excellence shines throughout the universe, gathering into focal splendor upon the person of our exalted Saviour, the organ by whom it shall be dispensed to the Redeemed forever; for it is written of the New Jerusalem, that it had "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."—Rev. xxi: 23.

There is reserved, however, a more interior display of Divine perfections through a *method of Grace*. The law discovers God to us in the attributes of wisdom, power, holiness, justice and truth. But how shall Jehovah open to us His infinite heart—disclosing the depths of its tenderness, His boundless compassion, His inconceivable mercy and love? To do this, He must look upon the suffering and lost, and find a surety who shall bear their guilt and die their death under the curse. But where shall this substitute be found? In vain the challenge went forth from the august throne in tones which only the offended law could use, "whom shall I send and who will go for us?" Silence reigned throughout all the courts of Heaven; for none of the sons of the morning might adventure the dreadful perils of such a trust—till a voice sounded forth from the midst of the throne, "lo! I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea thy law is within my heart," Ps. 40: 7 8. Bursting from the secret pavillion, the eternal Word leaps forth to execute the stern demand. He unclothes Himself of light, and lays aside the garments of praise, and takes upon Him the form of a servant, that He may sound the depths of human woe, and pay the costly ransom for a guilty soul. By an obedience grander in its proportions than the aggregate obedience of all the creatures, Christ vindicates the law's injured majesty; whilst through His grace he brings out the tenderest affections of the Father as a God of love. Sublime is that utterance of Scripture, which tells us that God is Life; equally sublime the testimony, which tells us He is Light; but grander still, in the comprehension of them both, is the revelation which tells us God is *Love*. To enthrone this grace by the side of law as the Queen Majesty, the author of grace is made the administrator of law. As the covering cloud tempered the brightness of God's presence upon the mercy seat, so forever must the law shine out from the mercy in which it is embosomed; that obedience may be sweetened—not only as a debt which conscience pays to duty, but an homage which the heart pays to love. Thus, the two lines of law and grace by which the Divine glory streams forth upon the universe, converge upon the person of Jesus Christ in the administration of His delegated trust as "the Head over all things to the Church."

I must now turn your thoughts from Christ to his Church, here set forth as His body and fulness; only regretting that I must shut up in simple sentences, what deserves expansion through paragraphs.

The Church, in accordance with a very familiar distinction, may be viewed by us in two aspects. There is the *ideal Church*, conformed to the pattern drafted in the Divine purpose, composed of the elect in all ages, who have been washed, justified and sanctified; and there is the *actual, visible Church*, composed of those who profess faith in the Redeemer, whether they be his or not. These two interpenetrate each other, and are largely identified in the statements of Scripture; and of both, in important though different senses, it may be affirmed they are the fulness of Christ. The former as being,

1. *The object upon which the fullness of his grace expends itself.* The two you perceive are reciprocal, the fulness and the distribution. Thus the Evangelist says: "The word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." John i: 14, 16. The same is stated with equal distinctness in Col. 2: 9, 10, "for in Him dwelleth

all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—and ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power.” The glory of Christ, is not simply in being the architect of grace, by whom it was historically wrought out and engrafted upon law; but in being also the depository of grace—its dispenser no less than its procurer. The two cannot be viewed apart; Christ, the head of all principality and power, and the Church complete in that gracious fulness which He imparts. Hence, true believers in every age have been drawn from all grades of society, under every degree of culture, have been placed under every variety of discipline, subjected to every form of temptation, recovered from every species of sin, and conducted through all the stages of spiritual growth; that through all might be displayed the exceeding riches of divine grace—grace for all, and according to the varying exigencies of each,

2. *The Church of the Elect is the body; that is to say, it is the complement of the mystical Christ.* In the Covenant of Redemption, the Father gave to the Son a seed to be redeemed, and constituted Him their representative and surety. In all federal transactions the two ideas are conjoined. As in the Covenant of Works, the first Adam cannot be considered in his separate personality, but also as the representative of his natural seed; so in the Covenant of Grace, the second Adam is incomplete except as associated with his spiritual seed. The two terms are united in the very notion of a covenant. In this sense, the Church is pre-eminently the body and fulness of Christ; and through all time Christ is reproducing himself in His members. While in His immediate person He is exalted at the right hand of the majesty in the Heavens, and will never again appear but with His own glory and with the glory of the Father, yet in the church which is His body He is still “the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” In all the persecutions, afflictions, temptations and distress of His people, He renews His own humiliation and the agony of His own conflict with the powers of darkness. This is the ground of our confidence and hope, as we pass beneath the rod and stagger under our cross: that as “it behooved the great Captain of our salvation to be made perfect through suffering,” so must all the members of His body drink of His cup, and be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized.

3. *This Church of the Elect is the fulness of Christ, as constituting the reward of His mediatorial work.* Having redeemed them with His own priceless blood, and sanctified them by His indwelling Spirit, he must, according to the stipulations of the covenant, present them to the Father, “holy and without blame before Him in love.” To this end, He must appear as the Resurrection and the Life, that they may “receive the adoption, to wit: the redemption of their bodies.” Amidst the terrors of a burning world, He must sit upon the throne of judgment and pronounce the Father’s authoritative benediction, “come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” “Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father;” that God, in the supremacy of his law, “may be all in all.” Having wound up His mediatorial work in this final act of mediatorial authority, and fulfilled all the promises on which the faith of His people ever leaned, He presents them to the Father, according to His eternal pledge, “a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish,” “meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.” This Church is then given back into His hands, to be His reward and His rejoicing forevermore. They swell His train, as He ascends a second time through the clouds into the heavens: shouting, as they rise, the triumphant challenge, “lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.” Ps. 24: 7. Gathered at length into “the General Assembly and Church of the first born, which are written in Heaven,” they form

the nearest circle around the throne, and give the key note of that song with which the arches of the great temple shall forever ring. Glorious in that righteousness of God which they have received by faith, the saints, like so many crystal pillars, shall surround the Lamb in the midst of the throne; till all Heaven becomes bright with the reflected splendors of that wrought righteousness which answers to the holiness of God, expressed through the law. As the great anthem of praise rolls up from the company of the redeemed, the High Priest of this transfigured Church gathers all into His golden censer and waves it before the throne. Thus, in a sublimer sense, the God of Holiness is seen to be "all in all;" and the Lamb again is seen to be the light of the New Jerusalem. In this final and exhaustive sense, this glorified Church becomes the body of the great Head, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

It must not, however, escape us that this spiritual Church has its manifestation here in the Church actual and visible: the incarnation through which it becomes to us a thing tangible and known. In this view, also, Christ is still her head—and she, His fulness: because,

1. *In this embodied form Christ is Her only King*; enacting by His sole legislation, laws for her government—appointing, by His executive authority, officers for her administration—instituting in His priestly jurisdiction, the ordinances of her worship—and granting, in the supremacy of His headship, the charter by which her immunities and rights are held. In this pure theocracy, the mediator is King; and all power under Him is simply ministerial. By whatever names we choose to designate her earthly guides, their function is simply to expound a written Constitution, and to enforce, by spiritual censures, obedience to a spiritual and unseen Ruler.

2. *Because through this visible Church Christ acquires His wider mediatorial authority over the Universe*. As mediator, his prime relation is to those whom he comes to reconcile. The plan of grace, though last in development, is first in the Divine thought, the most stupendous of all God's works; and the earth was built but as the stage on which the sublime drama of redemption might be enacted. The whole scheme of nature is therefore subordinated to it: and the administration of Providence is committed to Christ, for the prosecution of that grace which he came to inaugurate. Hence Paul testifies that He is given to be the Head over all things to the Church, "which is His body;" through her as His fulness He himself "filleth all in all."

3. *Christ, in His precious Headship, heals the breach which sin has made between the creatures; and the visible Church, finally embracing all nations within her pale, bodies forth this grand result*. The first transgression not only separated man from God, but seemed forever to have dissolved the brotherhood between the creatures also. From that day till now, the beasts of the field have been in revolt against the dominion of man, and the elements of nature are reclaimed under his control only through the discoveries of science. The one speech of the infant race has been broken into a thousand jarring tongues, and the earth has been covered with violence and blood. But the Reconciler came. Planting his cross as the great magnet of earth, He draws to Himself his purchased seed, incorporates them into a society of love, and sends them forth to throw its bands around a shattered world. Prophecy, through her roll, shows in the dim perspective this church embracing all lands and tongues and tribes within her arms, and "the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." The reconciliation ends not here. When this militant Church shall be transfigured in the skies, to her visible worship and fellowship will be added the "innumerable company of angels" whom sin has never soiled. The sad breach is forever healed; and cherubim and a flaming sword shall no longer guard the way of the tree of life against guilty man. He who has "made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteous-

ness," has also "made an end of sins." Sin, death and hell are cast into the lake of fire: and the redeemed Universe is brought into one under Him who is Head over all. Saints and angels shall blend in harmony of praise around his throne, and the schism of sin be cancelled forever in the church fellowship of Heaven.

Fathers and Brethren, I must not shut down the gate upon the flood of this discourse, without pointing to the consolation for us in this day of darkness and trial, wrapped up in the Headship of the adorable Redeemer. *What tenderness it gives to the whole doctrine of Providence!* Once we trembled in our guilt and shame, and could not look upon the angry throne; to us

"A seat of dreadful wrath,
Which shot devouring flame."

But healing peace flowed into our wounded hearts, as we looked upon "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." In like manner the dispensations of Providence seem relentless and stern, as they frown upon us from "the unknown God;" but the dark clouds are drenched in soft and mellow light, as they are moved by the hands of our "Immanuel, God with us." All judgment is committed to the Son of Man; can we not trust Him, our elder brother, clothed with all our sympathies, who hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, and is able to succor in that he himself hath suffered? The name of this precious Jesus broke for us the spell of despair, when in the hour of legal conviction conscience lung up the ghastly catalogue of our sins against the Judgment throne. The name of Jesus will be the last upon our lips, softly whispered by the departing spirit as the last breath wafts it upward to the skies. It will be first upon our lips when the grave shall yield up its dead to meet the Lord in the air. Shall it not be always upon our lips, taking away the bitterness of our private and our public lot; when all these dispensations are read through an exposition of grace, and are seen throughout to be a discipline of love?

What safety also to the Universe in this Headship of Jesus! He, who grasped the idea of creation as it lay a silent thought in the mind of God, can surely work out the eternal purpose in which it was framed. For this very end, He is given to be the Head over all things—that as He is "before all things," so "by Him shall all things consist." The overturnings upon earth make no fissure in the one solemn purpose of the Infinite Creator, and no sudden disclosures startle Him into surprise. The shuttle of history moves swiftly and blindly from age to age; but the great web is woven according to the pattern originally designed in the council of the Godhead.

But He is head over all things to the Church! Whilst, therefore, a purpose of grace remains to be fulfilled in that Church which he has graven on the palms of his hands and wears as a seal upon his heart, so long the world is safe in the keeping of Him whose love is stronger than death. The Christian Church is to a Christian nation the ark of Jehovah's covenant; and we are here to-day in sublime faith to bear that ark upon our shoulders in the presence of this infant nation, as she passes under her baptism of blood. Let us gather with reverence around it, and sing with Luther the 46th Psalm: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, though the kingdoms be moved, and the earth melted—yet the Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

What glory too surrounds the Church! an outer halo, a second rainbow to that which, like an emerald, John saw round the throne! She is the body of Christ, the bride, the Lamb's wife, whose "beauty" the "King hath greatly desired." She is glorious in her "raiment of needle work," "her clothing of

wrought gold," "the fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints." The Church of the living God! and, therefore, herself living by a secret life flowing from Him who is life, and bestowed by the indwelling Spirit who is the quickener. The immortal Church of Christ, which survives all change and never knows decay! Alas, the paths of earth are strewn with the wrecks of broken empires, constructed by human wisdom and shattered through human folly and sin. But this Church of the Redeemer moves through them all upon the grand highway of History, and "flourishes in immortal youth." She rode upon the billows of a universal deluge, beneath whose gloomy depths lay a doomed and buried world. Patriarchs gathered beneath her shade in the aged and hoary past. Moses pitched her tabernacle upon the sands of the wilderness, and beneath the frowning brows of Sinai. Prophets pointed out her pathway through the up-rolling mists of the distant future. Through the unfolding ages she has moved securely on, while disastrous change has ground to powder and scattered to the winds the proudest dynasties of earth. Kings have bound her with fetters of brass; but the fair captive has taken again her harp from the willows, and God has made her walls salvation and her gates praise. Amidst the fires of martyrdom, she has risen younger from the ashes of her own funeral pile. Wooing the nations with her accents of love, she lengthens her cords to gather them into her broad pavilion. And when the whole frame of nature shall be dissolved, she will stand serene above the burning earth, to welcome her descending Lord. Caught up by Him into the Heavens, she will gather into her communion there all the elder sons of God; still the immortal Church of the Redeemer, out-living all time and henceforth counting her years upon the Dial of eternity!

Do we understand, Fathers and Brethren, the mission of the Church given us here to execute? It is to lift up throughout the world our testimony for this Headship of Christ. The convocation of this Assembly is in part that testimony. But a little while since, it was attempted in the most august court of our Church to place the crown of our Lord upon the head of Cæsar—to bind that body, which is Christ's fulness, to the chariot in which that Cæsar rides. The intervening months have sufficiently discovered the character of that State, under whose yoke this Church was summoned to bow her neck in meek obedience. But in advance of these disclosures, the voice went up throughout our land, of indignant remonstrance against the usurpation, of solemn protest against the sacrilege. And now this Parliament of the Lord's freemen solemnly declares that, by the terms of her great charter, none but Jesus may be the King in Zion. Once more in this distant age and in these ends of the earth, the Church must declare for the supremacy of her Head, and fling out the consecrated ensign with the old inscription, "for Christ and His crown."

Let this testimony be borne upon the winds over the whole earth, that He who is "Head over all things to the Church," "ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will," until all nations are brought to "praise and extol and honor the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth and His ways judgment." Let us take this young nation now struggling into birth, to the Altar of God, and seal its loyalty to Christ, in the faith of that benediction which says "blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord." The foot-steps of our King are to be seen in all the grand march of History, which begins and ends in a true theocracy. Our voice is to be the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God:" For he "will overturn, overturn, overturn, until He come whose right it is"—and "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ."

Above all, it is ours to bear aloft the Redeemer's Cross, and with the finger over pointing to say, with the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan, "behold the Lamb

of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" May He who wears the crown make us to feel the power of that Cross! Brethren, we have to-day been gazing into Heaven after our ascending Lord, ascending to His Headship and his Crown. From His gracious throne He unfolds the sacred parchment on which our charter and commission are engrossed: "Go ye into all the world and disciple all nations." With pathetic gesture, He also points over mountains, continents and seas to the "other sheep which are not of this fold," wandering upon the bleak heather, under the dark star of some idol god. May the rushing mighty wind of the Pentecostal day fill this house where we are sitting! and may the tongue of fire rest upon each of this Assembly! Emblem of the power with which the story of suffering love shall subdue an apostate world! Sinking personal ambition, and forgetful of sectional aggrandisement, let us strive to equip the Church with the necessary agencies for the prosecution of her solemn work. Let us build her towers and establish her bulwarks just where the most effective assaults may be made upon the kingdoms of Satan; that "her righteousness may go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth;" and Zion become "a crown of glory," a "a royal diadem in the hand of our God."