

THE HOMILETIC MONTHLY.

A MAGAZINE

DEVOTED TO THE PUBLICATION OF SERMONS AND OTHER
MATTER OF HOMILETIC INTEREST.

VOL. VI. — FEBRUARY, 1882. — No. 5.

SERMONIC.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

A COMMUNION SERMON, BY CHARLES
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(Matt. xvii: 1-9.)

(Translated for this publication by Rev. J. C.
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THAT WAS AN HOUR of blessed mystery which the three disciples were privileged to pass with their Master on the Mount of Transfiguration; that was an exclamation of supernatural ecstasy which fell from the lips of Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here: let us make here three tabernacles!" The world with its misery beneath them, the Lord gloriously transfigured before them, the communion of saints surrounding them—these three highly-favored disciples in these blissful moments breathed on Mount Tabor the atmosphere, as it were, of a better world, and enjoyed a foretaste of that happy existence when the spirits of the transfigured saints shall be forever assembled above in the tabernacles of peace, on the celestial Mount Zion, in the city of the living God.

To be sure, they were only blissful moments, it was only a fleeting fore-

[The first several sermons are reported in full; the remainder are given in condensed form. Every care is taken to make these reports correct; yet our readers must not forget that it would be unfair to hold a speaker responsible for what may appear in a condensation, made by another, of his discourse.]

taste. The tabernacles were not built on Mount Tabor. From the illumined lights of the transfiguration, the way led once more down to the earthly vale of woe; from Tabor the way led to the place of suffering on Mount Olive, to the tree of torture on Golgotha. Christ's way leads down, and whosoever wishes to ascend with Him, must first descend with Him. This was now fulfilled in the case of the Master and His disciples.

The splendor of what they beheld on Tabor was reflected in their souls during the darkest hours of their lives; what they heard on the Mount rang continually in their inmost hearts during their entire wearisome pilgrimage, and after many years John, in his Gospel, at remembrance of that joyful hour, wrote these words (i: 14): "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And Peter, in his second epistle (i: 16-18), testifies on this point: we "were witnesses of His Majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came

glorify your Benefactor. Abraham did this when he gave tithes to Melchizedek, and refused to be enriched by the King of Sodom.

He did business with God. Faith in God made him rich—in lands he never saw, in cattle he never counted, and in fame of which he never dreamed.

This thought should be kept in mind by all. Is a man in poverty or distress? The probabilities are that he has sinned. It is usually worse than a misfortune to be poor, it is a sign of sin. Such may not have stolen, or falsified, or violated any of the commands of the decalogue, but somewhere and at sometime they withheld from God. There are exceptions, but this is true as a general rule. A man is now without a place, because he was not prompt or lost respect or confidence. Another is without hope, because God cannot trust him with a blessing. Christ said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you." This man had blessings, and, like a miser, went and hid them, and kept them, and got no more, and lost even that which he imagined was his. Are you poor? It is your fault. A Gospel that costs nothing is an absurdity. It costs. It cost the life of the Son of God. It costs Christians untold and nameless sacrifices. No one can afford to receive it without giving back to the world, because of the blessings received. The theory that movements for the salvation of men can be advanced by any such rallying cry as, "No pews or no collections," is a mistake, if it is not worse. Men, who are thus taught to live, are taught to steal. No wonder hymn-books are taken. Poverty is the result of such surroundings. A Gospel that costs nothing is worth nothing.

Men must be made to feel their responsibility. It is their duty freely to give, because they freely received. Great trusts bring great responsibilities. The faith that God is a silent partner, is the foundation of the growth and prosperity of our great givers and of our successful workers. All should learn to give rather than to withhold. Giving is a help to God's cause.

The great giver is a great gatherer. He gathers love, power and influence, and revels in the smile of God.

GOD THE CHIEF OBJECT OF SEARCH.

BY B. M. PALMER, D.D. OF NEW ORLEANS, IN UNIVERSITY PLACE CHURCH, NEW YORK.

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us—Acts xvii: 27.

THERE is a pathos in the entire passage which should move to tears those whose religion is in any sense cultivated. Let us picture the scene. In the midst of all "an altar with this inscription, *To the Unknown God.*"

Who is that solitary man who moves with solemn step amid all this culture? It is the man of Tarsus. How his soul is moved as he stands before that altar-stone! He preaches there to that philosophic, cultured, worshiping people. Our text is a sentence in that noble sermon. Let us consider—

I. IN WHAT SENSE IT IS TRUE THAT GOD IS NOT FAR FROM EVERY ONE OF US.

1. God is nigh to us in the creation which is around us. Paul states this in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. This may also be inferred from design. Upon this argument we do not enter. We are finite beings, and are surrounded by the infinite. The infinite must be immediately with the finite. We cannot think otherwise of the infinite God. God becomes a necessity of human thought. Hence some notion of God has found a place in the minds of all the inhabitants of the globe. God is so nigh that we cannot get behind a medium in our thoughts of Him.

2. God is not far from any one of us, in the sense of creaturely dependence and trust. The infinite must always supply the finite. In seasons of sickness, bereavement, pestilence, calamity, how we feel this truth—God is not far from any one of us! How we feel the necessity of this truth then!

3. God is not far from any one of us, in that He is the God to whom the soul

tends. Paul says, "We are His offspring." The children think of their father. We hear much prating in some quarters about the dignity of human nature. But man is grander than the greatness to which human philosophy would elevate him. Man is God's creation. He is God's child. God breathed into him, and made him a living soul. Think of man's endowments. Look at his intellect. What wonders it can perform! What discoveries in science it has made! But what are all sciences but a highway to God! Like the milkyway in yonder heavens, along which God seems to drive His chariot, all sciences lead to God, who is the end of all knowledge. The grandeur of man is, that he is made in God's image. What a trinity in man are the intellect, the will, the affections! And then conscience, that tribunal below—the shadow of the tribunal above—that faculty before which that law pleads which leads up to God, the origin of all law! The æsthetic faculty in humanity argues also the nearness of man to Him who is beautiful in holiness, and who desires to shed His beauty upon His creatures. In these various ways God is not very far from any one of us.

II. IN WHAT SENSE DOES MAN FEEL AFTER GOD?

1. In every search for an object to love there is a groping after God. All objects are associated by a law of the human mind. Love, *e. g.*, is not a thing that can be cut wholly out of the human heart. A mother pours the wealth of her love upon each of her seven children. But these do not exhaust her love. She is yearning for something better to love than even her children. All these affections pour themselves at last into the bosom of God. God thus trains man to love her; and man is thus feeling after Him.

2. The intense longing after human fellowship is feeling after God. This is felt by every one. The prisoner in his lonely cell speaks to a leaf that appears on the floor, holds intercourse with it as a friend, and weeps when it withers and passes away; and so with another

prisoner and a spider. How imperfect is the fellowship we can have even with any of human kind! A husband cannot tell all even to the wife of his bosom. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." No human word can express the whole even of human love, or the burden of human sorrow. What then? Shall man be like the caged eagle that beat out its brains on the bars of its cage? Ah! no. He can go into the closet and speak to God: if he cannot express all his feelings there, there are groanings which cannot be uttered that God hears. God is felt after.

3. In the *instinct of acquisition* there is a feeling after God. This is a part of human nature. Man must seek to acquire. Why? The explanation is, God is at the end of all that is to be acquired. Man is *instinctively ambitious*. He must be so with his noble qualities. God does not condemn ambition. If he did, He would not have set before man thrones, crowns. All is sought after by man because God is at the end; and in all man's acquisitions and ambitions the soul is crying after God.

4. Man's feeling after God is seen in the awful necessity there is in him for worship. Men worship something everywhere. The solemn and the beautiful in nature or in art tend to make man think of worship—the heart is feeling after some one who is perfect in majesty and beauty. Is there, then—

III. ANY CERTAINTY THAT MAN WILL FIND HIM? "If *haply* they may find Him."

Why should man ever fail to find Him? Sin has separated between man and God. God wants man to find Him. But man desired not to retain God in his knowledge. Look at the Incarnation, and say if God does not want man to find Him? Heathen mythology had the idea obscurely—Jupiter, Diana, etc. But God's Word alone reveals an incarnation—that is, "*God with us.*" Look at redemption, also—the new birth. If all other evidence of Christianity were wanting, we would defend it on the basis of the new birth. This is the

pass of Thermopylæ in the defense of Christianity. The Holy Spirit changing man's nature, making him His temple, purifying him, sustaining him, etc., till he is presented "faultless" to the Father, with exceeding joy. Who, in meditating on these things, can doubt that *God wants* man to find Him, or that man *can* find Him?

There is a necessity laid upon every soul to find God. No matter what knowledge any man may have gained, if he has not gained the knowledge of God, he has not gained anything really valuable. He has missed the object of his creation, and of his search. Think of such a man launched into eternity bereft of all his knowledge—in the universe then without anything that can avail him; without God, or only a God of justice to him then! If you doubt that man can find God, listen to the testimony of the Church in every age, to the song of the great multitude before the throne.

"This is life eternal, to know Thee the true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

A VISION OF THE FATHER.

BY REV. T. A. NELSON, IN THE MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BROOKLYN.

Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.—
John xiv: 8.

THIS has been the cry of the human heart from the beginning. Ever since the entrance of sin which robbed man of his primitive innocence, and caused his expulsion from the garden where he had once walked and talked with God as a friend—ever since that day there has been a loneliness in the heart, a longing after God. This has sometimes shown itself in idolatry, in the pathetic desire for "gods to go before us," as in the days of Moses. In the advent of Christ, the cry is answered.

I. There are reasons why this should be so, and a vision of the Father be granted. Without some visible embodiment we should fail to grasp the idea of God. His immensity, power and glory we cannot comprehend. We can-

not even grasp the notion of spirit, so delicate and illusive are its nature and movements. We watch it in life and in the solemn processes of death, when body and soul part company, but we are baffled in our eager quest. God is a spirit. Only as clothed in flesh, and presented to us in Jesus Christ, can we conceive of Him.

Moreover, it is only by Jesus Christ that a sense of God's nearness to us is realized. Though very high above us, and filling immensity with His presence, we find Him in Christ drawing to us in endearing nearness, so that we may feel His presence real and precious. Him have we seen, looked on, handled—even the Word of life. The Romish system of intercession of saints is a mute testimony to the sense of distance which the sinning soul experiences, reflecting on sin and on God's far-off glory and holiness.

II. This response to man's cry, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," is worthy attention. As we gain a view of Christ we understand God, the Invisible. Our views may be made more complete by looking at Christ from different points, just as we study a statue from opposite sides, or gain the conception of human growth by seeing pictures of the same individual taken at different periods of his life—in youth, adolescence and manhood. Look at the Master blessing little children, and reflect that He who pressed those dear ones to His heart is the same forever. His blessing is upon the offspring of those that love Him. His compassionate hand was laid on the leper, the blind and the sick. His very shadow was a hospital, and in His touch was the tenderness of God!

Behold His pity for the woman who was ostracized by society as "a sinner." Haughty Pharisees drew about them their robes as they passed near her. She was well known about town, and looked upon with disgust. Even womanhood then dreaded, and now shuns, the touch of such sinning ones. We have need of more of the Master's spirit. These fallen ones appeal to our