

Man's Twofold Life included in the Promise of Godliness.

A DISCOURSE,

PREACHED AT THE

INSTALLATION OF REV. WILLIAM IRVIN,

AS PASTOR OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN RONDOUT.

BY

JOHN PROUDFIT, D.D.

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RONDOUT, N. Y., March 1st, 1862.

REV. DR. PROUDFIT :

DEAR SIR : On behalf of the Rondout Presbyterian Church, we request for publication the instructive and able sermon preached by you at the late ordination and installation of our pastor, your nephew, the Rev. WILLIAM IRVIN.

Hoping for ourselves, as well as for the congregation we represent, that you will accede to our request, we remain,

Yours, with great respect,

(Signed)

W. B. CRANE,

On behalf of the Session.

DEAR SIR :

I was absent from home several weeks after receiving the request contained in your obliging note of March 1st. This will account for my delay in complying with it. I now place the sermon at your disposal, with one explanation : Portions of it were unwritten when delivered ; these have been written out at greater length than they were delivered, and that part which relates to the influence of Christianity on the State has of course been modified by the important successes of the last few weeks.

Yours very respectfully,

J. PROUDFIT.

W. B. CRANE, Esq.

NEW-YORK, May 7th, 1862.

DISCOURSE.

1 TIM. 4 : 8.

“GODLINESS is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

ONE of the most interesting aspects of nature is that in which life is seen to survive death and come out of it in new and higher forms. This phenomenon, on a narrow and humble scale, has been visible to all ages. But science has of late vastly extended our knowledge of it. Naturalists now affirm that this law of metamorphosis, or *form-change*, pervades all life. Traces of it appear even in the fossil remains of remote geological periods and long-extinct species. Every thing that lives, lives again. Life invariably repeats itself, under a new organization, with new instincts, faculties, and relations to the external world. Within the cycle of these changes, death is no extinction, not even an interruption of life. It is only the passage into another, in some cases a multiplied, in others a far more powerful and beautiful life. The *exuviae* of the earlier form are left behind ; the life itself is expanded and exalted. Man is the antitype of these humbler transformations. Nature, in her inferior orders, is here an “emblem of man, who passes, not expires.”

“The life that now is, and that which is to come!” The great lesson of nature is here solemnly affirmed by the word of God. Man’s whole existence lies before us in these two phrases. There is something wonderfully grand and solemn in this glance through death into an endless future; the more impressive and startling, perhaps, from the indirect and incidental way in which it occurs, just as an object which comes obliquely to the eye sometimes makes a more full and clear impression than that which is placed directly before it. The Bible generally assumes or implies the future existence of man. Here it clearly announces it. How sharply it lies defined in the perspective of the Apostle’s picture, “the life that now is, and *that which is to come*”!

There is, then, “a life to come.” The present is not the whole of man’s existence. A great fallacy lurks in the oft-repeated maxim, *We have only one life to lead*. We have two. Death is only the point of transition from the first to the second. Not for a moment does man cease to exist — to live. This breath of God by which man became a living soul, can never be dissipated or become extinct. It “goes into another form of life,” so a heathen poet expressed the change long centuries ago, but it is life still. Analogy, reason, (which is the nobler instinct of man,) the word of God, all assure us of a two-fold life, “the life that now is, and that which is to come.”

“The life that now is.” Much as we know of that, it includes opposite properties, which make us the greatest of all mysteries to ourselves. Some which partake of the divine and infinite, combined with others which assimilate us to brutes, and even to senseless matter. We have an ideal presence through all space and duration; we explore, measure, and calculate the

movements of worlds which lie at a distance expressed by hundreds of millions of miles, and have "thoughts that wander through eternity," and yet our personality is fixed to the earth, as the tree is fixed in the soil. We should instantly die if removed a few miles from its surface. Here we were born, and here our first life must be passed. The life that now is, is "of the earth, earthy." Its senses, its faculties, the deeds it has achieved, the monuments it has reared, the sciences and arts it has perfected, the history it has made, are vast and wonderful. They are all but infinite. Man has occupied the earth, conquered the elements, and left amazing monuments of the unconquerable power and restless energy included in his present form of life, within less than sixty centuries. And yet, how short, how fragile, is this powerful life! The sting of a bee often kills it. A breath of infected air poisons it to death. It endures, and seems even to be invigorated by the severest fatigues and labors, and yet the slightest casualty demolishes it. Byrnes, who survived the deadly climates and savage beasts of Africa, a few days after his return tripped on the steps of his own drawing-room, fell, and was killed. Washington, who passed through two sanguinary wars, untouched by Indian arrows or English bullets, was wounded to death by a few drops of snow falling on his neck. So powerful and yet so weak, so hardy and enduring, and yet so perishable, is "the life that now is"! It has pure and lofty joys, too, and yet withal such bitter and inevitable sorrows, that we sometimes doubt whether it is a blessing or a calamity. "Oh! that thou wouldst hide me in the grave! I loathe it, I would not live always"!

"O Death! Where art thou, Death? so often called,
Wilt thou not listen? Wilt thou never come?"

These cries have been wrung from the bravest and most patient of sufferers by the extremity and long continuance of life's sorrows. Such a mystery and paradox is "the life that now is"!

The life "that is to come"! Ah! here is deeper mystery still. Death drops a curtain which we can not penetrate. The friend who has lived in the most intimate and endeared communion with us dies; and with the last breath passes utterly beyond our reach. The eye that turned at our first word, heeds us no more; the ear is deaf to our call; the voice gives us no response; the hand no longer returns our pressure. The form is still there. But it is like the mere case of an instrument whose strings have been torn out, and whose keys just now responding to our touch with rich and various harmony, give back no sound. The soul, the life, which once mantled in those cheeks, looked through those eyes, spoke through those lips, held mysterious communion with us through all those senses, has gone. Whither? Who can answer that question?

"What worlds or what vast regions hold
Th' immortal mind, that hath forsook
Its mansion in this fleshly nook?"

A barrier, impassable even to thought, rises up in the moment of death, between the dead and the living. Mail and telegraph will carry messages far and swiftly between friends separated by broad lands and seas. But there is no postal service with the world beyond death. More than 30,000,000 migrate into that world annually. Nearly 100,000 every day. But from that countless host of emigrants there comes back no return message. There are, indeed, those who profess that they hold communication with departed souls. But if such drivel as they report from the world beyond

death is authentic, we are forced to conclude that the human mind undergoes a great degradation in entering that other life. Socrates has become a fool, David "a coarse and sensual fiend," Franklin a blunderer, and Washington a trifler, if the utterances which come to us through mesmeric trances, table-rappings, and spirit-dials are indeed theirs. But the dead can not converse with the living. All authentic and well-considered experience proves that. Several British officers, it is said, on the eve of a great battle, spent the preceding night in anxious discussion about the state of souls after death. They parted toward morning with a mutual promise that if either of them fell in the expected battle, he would, if it were possible, come back, and let the survivors know what were his experiences in that other state. One of them was killed. The survivors long expected and anxiously watched for the fulfillment of his promise. But *he never came back*. In no sound, thought, or impression by day, or dream by night, could they trace the voice or the touch of their departed friend. No, life "in the body" and "out of the body" admit of no inter-communication. Have we not all had friends who, "if it were possible," would have come back and told us what has befallen them after death? While they were here on earth, they would not endure to be separated from us even for a few days, without keeping up the communion of thought and love by correspondence. Now they have been gone for long years; but since the moment they took leave of us in death, there has been unbroken silence, absolute interruption of intercourse. This would not be so, "if it were possible" that it should be otherwise. If there be any thing immortal in human nature, it is love. And love would often bring back the dead on visits to the living;

nothing would be more common than interviews and conversations between the departed and the surviving, not mediated by a hired clairvoyant, nor through such stupid media as tables, dials, or sounding-boards, but direct communion of spirit with spirit, or through some organ worthy of a soul and congenial to it; were it not that when the soul passes from the body, it undergoes a change of essence, state or abode, or is placed under some imperative interdict, which utterly separates it from those who are still in the flesh. We are on the very verge of that life to come. Its interests are of immense magnitude to us; yet to sense, reason, and experience, it is covered with an impenetrable vail.

Now, the Apostle tells us here that "godliness" hath promise of both these lives of man, "of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

What is that "godliness" for which he claims so powerful and beneficent an influence over the whole existence, present and future, of man?

The word is used oftener in this epistle than in all the New Testament beside. It is combined of two, the one an intensive particle, denoting the great abundance, intense quality or happy condition of the thing with which it is associated; the other signifying *reverence*, or *worship*. The compound, therefore, which we render *godliness* signifies a high degree of reverence for God, and the manifestation of it in prayer, praise, thanksgiving and obedience. It is nearly equivalent to piety. It is virtue, specially and primarily, in its relation to God.

But the Apostle uses it with a wide signification. He speaks* of "the mystery of godliness," and includes in it the whole mediatorial history of Christ, and

* Tim. 3 : 16.

all the truth revealed through it. "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." All this he comprehends in "the mystery of godliness." Again he speaks of the "doctrine (or tuition) according to godliness,"* with evident allusion to the preceptive part of Christianity. In another place† he puts godliness with "faith, love, patience and meekness," as a Christian virtue, a manifestation of the Christian spirit. In the seventh verse of this chapter he exhorts Timothy to *exercise himself unto godliness*; and that expression implies a primary reference to the active virtues of the Gospel. And thus we see that godliness is now historical, and again ethical, practical, or spiritual, and we therefore conclude that it is the whole of Christianity, the truth and influence which it communicates from God, and the character which it forms in man.

Of godliness in this large sense, the Apostle affirms that it is "profitable," wholesome, helpful, advantageous, beneficial "unto all things;" all the faculties and interests of human nature, all conditions of human existence; "having promise (literally, announcement, annunciation, assurance) of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Can this claim be made good? If it can, we shall certainly agree to what the Apostle says in another passage of this same epistle, that "godliness is great gain." That must, indeed, be great gain which provides at once and forever for all the interests of man. Let us inquire into this.

In one sense, godliness hath promise or announcement of man's entire existence, present and future. It reveals

* 1 Tim. 6 : 3.

† 1 Tim. 6 : 11.

the origin of that existence. The life of man began in the breath of God. His parentage was divine, and he was made in the image, after the likeness of God. Adam "was the son of God;" and "we are also his offspring." This gives a sublime grandeur and importance to human existence. We augur great destinies, an elevated sphere, an important history, whether for good or evil, to the son of a great human sovereign. We look upon him as born to greatness. To what an incomprehensible greatness, then, must he be born who is "the offspring of God."

Specially, godliness hath, in various ways, promise of the life that now is.

1. It recognizes its value and importance. It has nothing in common with those hideous and heathenish asceticisms which profess to liberate and purify the soul by the maceration and debilitation of the body, and to make the tortures of the present life the price and achievement of the happiness of the next. It is part of the Apostle's claim in behalf of godliness, that it "hath promise of the life that now is;" that it is "profitable" to it. That very claim admits its importance. "The life that now is" stands forth to our view in this passage as a distinct department or stadium of human existence. The Apostle by no means undervalues even the "exercise" which tends to the development of our physical nature. "Bodily exercise" (or rather bodily training, *gymnasia*, for that is the precise word he uses) "is profitable," wholesome, useful—"for a little," a little matter, a little while; little, because pertaining to a life which is transitory, and here presented in contrast with the higher, endless life which is to follow.

2. It assures a competent provision for the wants of

the life that now is. As it teaches that even this animal life, this mortal frame, are the gift and work of God, so it promises that he will surely care for its wants. Bread shall be given, water shall be sure. God does not forget his meanest creatures; will he forget his human children? No finger or loom of man ever wove so delicate a texture as that which clothes the flowers, No human art ever compounded so exquisite a perfume as some of them exhale. No king has his repasts served with more unfailing regularity than the innumerable insects which cloud the air around us, or the worms which creep at our feet. That almost invisible thing, the coral-worm, has its food and building materials wafted to it from the tops of lofty mountains, along the course of far-flowing rivers, and across broad seas. Does God so clothe, and feed, and furnish his inferior creatures, and will he leave man unprovided for? Godliness conveys some of its most sublime lessons through such analogies. He who is its Master and Model has taught us to consider the lilies and the birds, and learn from them to trust the unfailing bounty of God.

3. Godliness blesses and exalts the life that now is, by the rich and various culture which it imparts to it. The materials and motives of this culture are contained in this precious and wondrous volume. Here is truth to awaken and develop the noblest faculties of the soul. Here are histories which trace back our race to its beginning, and permit us even to explore the eternal counsels of God in relation to it. Here are precepts which teach us to avoid those actions and dispositions which disquiet, embitter, and degrade our present life, and to attain that sobriety, purity, contentment, which are the elements of a tranquil and cheerful mind, and of a strong and harmonious character. And all this

body of truth and moral teaching is made efficacious by the life-giving, transforming power of the Spirit of God. It is the tendency of godliness, of all its revelations, laws and influences, to form a good and wise man, a happy family, and a free and well-ordered state. These are the three great aspects and interests of the life that now is. Godliness hath promise of them all.

4. The very restraints of godliness contribute to the elevation and increased enjoyment of our present life. The body itself is strengthened, and the animal life cherished and prolonged, as well as serenity and cheerfulness of mind promoted, by the sobriety and self-control, and even the self-denial, which godliness enjoins. It confines to their own place, and utilizes as motive power, those inner fires which, left to themselves, would speedily desolate and consume the whole fabric of humanity.

5. Godliness solves the mysteries of the life that now is. The most acute and profound thinker of Paganism is said to have died with these words on his lips: "I came into this world in pollution; I have passed through it in anxiety; and now I am going out of it, troubled and agitated." Here is indeed a great enigma, a corrupted nature, a troubled existence, ending in death, with an awful presentiment of that which is coming after! If mere force of intellect, applied through a long life of thought and research, could have solved the terrible problem, Aristotle would not thus have given it up in despair, in his last moments. In the Gospel we have the solution: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Sin has polluted the nature of man, disquieted his life, and drawn on him the penalty of death, overcast with a fearful

looking for of judgment. But it does not solve the awful mystery presented in the nature and life of man merely by disclosing its cause and history. It gives the better and higher solution of a remedy. It reveals an atonement for sin. It proclaims a full, free pardon. It presents God's beloved and suffering Son, "set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." It bestows a new heart, with God's law written on it afresh by his own finger, and his fear put within it, and his love shed abroad in it by the Holy Ghost. It brings to us these words from the throne of God: "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help." Man the self-destroyer, God the Restorer and Redeemer—these are the two great aspects of the doctrine according to godliness. In the blended light of these revelations, the ruin and misery which have overtaken the life that now is, are brought out of that violent antagonism with the goodness and wisdom of God, which drives the natural mind to despair and atheism, and becomes the occasion of a brighter display of the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man, and of a more exalted and an immutable happiness to man himself. "Sin hath reigned unto death"—that is the melancholy aspect of human history to the natural eye; but in the grand and final result disclosed by the Gospel, "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

6. Godliness gives to the life that now is, great objects, high hopes, a wide sphere, and a mighty power of useful and noble activity. There is nothing in which the Gospel more richly blesses life than in the aim which it sets before it, the labors which it assigns it—

that of being good and doing good. There is such a high and pure enjoyment in the very effort to grow in knowledge and virtue ourselves, and to promote knowledge and virtue among our fellow-men, that in those two precepts, "follow after holiness," and "do good to all men," Christianity has really provided the best solace for the cares and woes of life. Voltaire used to say : " Our path through life is beset with thorns ; the best way is to brush through them as rapidly as we can." But when we "brush through them," under the generous impulses of Christian love, with our hands busied in Christian enterprises, and our hearts cheered by Christian hopes, their power to annoy us is reduced to its minimum. In fact, no amount of sorrows or disappointments, no fightings without or fears within, can prevent a beneficent life from being a positively happy one.

7. Not the least benefit which godliness bestows on the life that now is, is the light which it sheds on its close. I now speak of death, in reference to the shadow which its foreseen and inevitable coming throws over our present life. Many, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage. All along their sad way, they are thinking of its sadder end. They pass through life, like a convict on a journey toward the place of execution ; and " feel a thousand deaths in fearing one." But the more that godliness penetrates and transforms the heart and rules the life, the more it relieves us from such dismal thoughts of death. To overcome the fear of it entirely is indeed a great victory over nature. To extinguish it utterly would perhaps be violence to nature. Even where faith rises to heroism and rapture, it does not eliminate that aversion to death which seems to be as universal as conscious life.

Paul said : " I have a desire to depart." But, then, even he said : " Not that I would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." He longed for that blessed and glorious life which he clearly discerned and fully expected beyond death ; but to be " unclothed" even of this form of life, to have the body stripped off, though only a " body of death," a vesture of mortality and decay, had something in it from which he shrank. He would gladly, if it were possible, have put on his heavenly robes over his earthly raiment, and had *this dying nature absorbed of life*. Such is the exact meaning of his words. And though he knew the wish could not be gratified, the utterance of it was a beautiful concession to nature. But with such feelings, death has no real terrors. All that is penal, almost all that is painful, has vanished from it. It is simply regarded as the necessary change by which " this corruptible *must* put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality." When we survey it afar off, it is as if one should look through a powerful glass at the works of an enemy, before deemed impregnable, and lo ! they are evacuated, and all that dreaded artillery which bristled on the walls, and peered through the embrasures, is seen to be a mere mockery of terror. How easy, after such a discovery, to dismiss all forebodings, and march cheerfully on to assured possession and easy victory !

All this godliness does for the life that now is. It reveals its source, and thus its greatness and significance ; it recognizes its special value and importance ; it provides for its wants ; it improves, refines, and ennobles it by its culture ; it solves its mysteries ; it gives it a great and animating object and work ; it relieves the fears, and dissipates the gloom which overhang its close.

This is but a faint and unfinished picture of its benefits. But it could not be complete without including every thing that is truly great and blessed in human existence. All that we call civilization, moral civilization certainly, is the product of that truth and culture which the Apostle here calls "godliness." Its germs are, it is true, implanted in human nature, and they have borne some fruit even in paganism, as rich flowers and blades of valuable grain spring up here and there, from accidental sowing, or nature's prolific virtue, in uncultivated ground. But such growth has been scanty indeed, compared with the glorious bloom and abundant harvest which they exhibit under the full culture of Christianity. We have only seen as yet the beginning of it. To test the power of Christianity to bless our present existence, we have only to take what is called Christian civilization, with all the unchristian elements mingled with it, and compare it with the condition of society in ancient or modern heathen nations. We see at once that there is no parallel to it in the world or in history. The intellect has indeed attained a wondrous vigor, and art has been brought to very

argues
leads
saves.

Godliness the source of national strength.

From a discourse of Rev. J. Broadfit D.D., of New
Brunswick, New Jersey.

Godliness is profitable unto all things, having
promise of the life that now is, & of that which
is to come. 1 Tim 4:8.

begin here

beginning, even in the
present life. Goodness, individual goodness, and do-
mestic love, purity, and peace, and political freedom
and security—these are the great constituents of human
happiness. The heart, the home, and the state, make
up the whole earthly sphere of humanity. Godliness
blesses, purifies, elevates, and harmonizes each and all;
and in its incomparable power to do this, "hath prom-
ise of the life that now is."

The last of these aspects is one in which we have,

just now, a peculiar interest. We are coming out of one of the most terrible concussions by which a nation was ever shaken. Let any man point, if he can, to another solitary instance in history, in which the highest rulers of a nation for several years administered the government of that nation for the dissolution and destruction of her polity; appropriated her revenues; stealthily fixed their grasp on her magazines and munitions of war; dispersed her forces by land and sea, corrupted as far as possible the officers which she had educated for her defense; perverted even her foreign embassies and consulships; in a word, used her whole power to consummate their long-cherished and deep-laid treason. There have been traitors in high places before. Kings and queens, cabinet-ministers and commanders-in-chief, have been traitors. Charles II. of England was a traitor; Margaret of France was a traitor; Biron, and Marlborough, and Struensee were traitors; but almost a whole government of traitors is happily an anomaly in history. It was a unique attempt at national suicide—a deadly blow dealt by the nation's hand at the nation's heart. A year of mortal agony has been the consequence. Renowned statesmen and representative journals of the Old World pronounced our case past all hope. "The once United States," "the dissolved and dismembered American Union," "the exploded Western Democracy," have been current phrases for the past few months. The division of "the sick man's" goods was confidently expected by impatient heirs. And yet we still live. The terrible crisis has past. The blow which was meant to inflict death is found to have opened a malignant imposthume which no political surgery would have ventured to operate upon. Instead of killing, it has cured us. In-

stead of letting out our life, it has let out the causes and menaces of death. Already we are conscious of the sweet hopes and reviving energies of national convalescence, and feel that we are entering on a new condition of political life, stronger, freer, and more thoroughly pervaded by that unity which is the evidence of high and powerful vitality, than any thing attained in our earlier history.

Now what has caused this revolution to bring forth results so different from those of Poland, Hungary, France, and (heretofore at least) Italy? What gave our people that astonishing unanimity in which the fierce strife of party was hushed, and the conflicting forces of parties combined for the common deliverance? Whence that generous patriotism which, without draft or conscription, offered near a million of lives to uphold the Government, and an amount of treasure which, one year ago, we should have pronounced a wild and impossible fiction? Whence that magnanimous patience (rarest of virtues in democracies!) with which a people proverbially vehement and excitable have waited through the long and apparently slow process by which the Government accumulated and organized the national force in order to strike the terrible and resistless blows necessary to crush so mighty a rebellion? Whence that unconquerable tenacity which disaster and delay have served only to purge of excitement and impulse, and to harden into inexorable firmness? ~~Some~~ ^{Some} of these elements have been wanting in almost all earlier struggles for freedom. Unity, persistent loyalty, readiness to forego party and personal interests, these are the organic forces of a free commonwealth; and it is precisely the lack of these which has rendered the divided and discordant forces of liberty heretofore an undermatch

for the high and perfect concentration of despotism. We did not know, a year ago, whether our people possessed these elements. But this great struggle has developed and manifested them in admirable strength.

Now where are we to look for their source and inspiration? We shall find it in the pious homes where so many of our youth have been nurtured; in the sanctuaries where their rights and duties have been expounded to them from the Word of God, and where their hearts have been lifted up by prayer and praise into a higher sphere than that of the material and perishable; in the Sunday-schools, which have sent their delicate but powerful filaments through the whole national organism; in the Christian labors which have multiplied and distributed the Holy Scriptures,—(a few years ago placing a copy of the Word of God in every American homestead,) — scattered religious tracts like snow-flakes over the whole surface of our population, and sent the living evangelist to visit the hamlets and huts of our remote and solitary frontiers. In short, we shall find the true sources of our national strength and unity in the faith, the worship, and the culture comprehended in that “godliness” of which the Apostle here speaks. It is said that the iron-clad vessels and powerful ordnance to which this conflict has given rise are revolutionizing warfare. But, my brethren, when the agitation of this crisis has passed away, other and more sublime lessons will be learned from it. It has drawn the gaze, it has excited the thoughtful attention of the world, that it may peacefully revolutionize society and government. The great revolution it will work is that which will result from the demonstration, that a Christian people can govern themselves, and provide against all the exigencies and perils to which free States are liable; that

they can, without parting with their liberty, concentrate the whole strength of the commonwealth to crush intestine conspiracy and rebellion; that they are not only unconquerable by force from without, but indissoluble by force from within. It is just at this point that history has failed thus far to demonstrate the safety and perpetuity of popular government. If the happy result of our national troubles shall supply this proof, if our Republic shall come out of this agitation with unimpaired freedom, and yet with a more perfect unity, and a more powerful national life than it entered it—and all appearances now justify the belief that it will—the nation will not be slow to appreciate the proof, that the faith, the worship, and the culture of the Gospel is the true, conservative influence to bind together, equilibrate, and uphold a free community; that, in the important and comprehensive sphere of the State, “godliness hath promise of the life that now is.”

And now remains “the life that is to come,” that mysterious and awful future beyond death, so near, so certainly expected, and yet so dreadful in its dim vastness, and the unchangeableness and eternity which we always associate with it. Can godliness do aught for that? Yes; it is “profitable” for that too. It “hath promise of the life that is to come.”

It hath promise of that life. The simple and direct meaning of the words is important. It contains the announcement, the assurance of a future life. Men have inferred it from the analogy of nature, from the operations of the soul. The Gospel ratifies the voice of nature by the clear and authoritative word of God. It *promises* that we shall live after we die. It answers that question: “If a man die, shall he live again?” It says: Yes; he shall live again; there is “a life to come.”

And observe how the light of its "promise" illumines every stage of our progress, every form through which we are to pass in that future existence.

1. Some of the most serious difficulties to reason beset our very entrance on that future life. How can spirit exist and act apart from body? We are accustomed here to receive all our perceptions, and put forth all our volitions and acts through corporeal senses and instruments. That the operations of the soul should continue after it is separated from the body is something unintelligible and inconceivable to us. To escape this difficulty, some have imagined a transmigration of souls into other human bodies, and even into brutes and plants. Others have sought to evade it by the theory of suspended consciousness. The promise of the Gospel is so full on this point as to leave no room for such absurd and degrading figments, and no need of them. Whatever it be of humanity that survives death, and which is called *soul* or *spirit*, it survives in a state of perfect consciousness and of unimpaired individuality and identity. The dead who die in the Lord are blessed. They rest. They are at home with the Lord. The same day they are with Christ in Paradise. No sooner are they "absent from the body" than they are "present with the Lord." They are "spirits made perfect." They are joined to the heavenly congregation, and partake of its worship and joys.

This "promise" has a worthy response in the clear and sublime utterances of the Church through her confessions and liturgies.

"The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory."

Such is the language of the *Westminster Catechism*. That of the Anglican Liturgy is equally clear:

"Almighty God, with whom do live the *spirits* of

those who depart hence in the Lord ; and with whom the *souls* of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity."

2. Even the poor *débris* of this life, the material and mortal body, has its share in the "promise." It "sleeps in Jesus." A holy and blessed repose, and a glorious awaking, are assured to it in those words. It may fall on the battle-field, sink into the depths of the sea, be devoured by beasts, assimilated to the earth, or diffused through the air, but He who fills heaven and earth holds it in his loving custody, and keeps its precious germ to open into the bloom of immortality.

3. The "life to come" will be brought to its perfect form in the resurrection from the dead. That event, with its awful and glorious concomitants, stands clearly forth in the announcement, the promise of godliness: "The trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we" (speaking as the representative of the godly then living on earth) "shall be changed"—"changed and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ." Mysterious but significant intimations are given even of the parts of that wondrous process. God shall bring with him them that sleep in Jesus. All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth ; they that have done good to the resurrection of life. The sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell (the invisible world) shall deliver up the dead which are in them. A grand and final acquittal, acknowledgment, and welcome to a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world shall then be given by the King in his glory before "all the nations" and "all holy angels" assembled, to all who have a share in this promise of godliness ; and so shall we "have our per-

fect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in God's eternal and everlasting glory."

4. That "life to come" will then be fully inaugurated. What scenes lie beyond, what will be the works, the enterprises, the enjoyments of transformed and glorified humanity through a never-ending life, is quite inconceivable by us "whose dwelling is in flesh." There are examples before us in inferior nature of successive forms of life. In these the first gives us very vague and imperfect intimations of the second. If we had not already seen the change, who could form an idea from the chicken in the shell of the full-fledged bird, with his brilliant plumage, his rich melody of voice, his strong wing cleaving the air? Who, from the colorless seed, could conjecture the full-blown flower, its form, hues, perfume; or the full-grown tree, its trunk, leaf, blossoms and fruit? As little does "the life now" enable us to conceive of the "life to come." The difference is probably inconceivably greater. When Christ tells us that "they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world (that life) and the resurrection of the dead, are equal unto the angels; and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection;" when Paul says, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly;" still more, when John says, "When he shall appear, we shall be like him;" their words open to us a future not more glorious than mysterious and incomprehensible. When we look into the depths of our own being even now, we may say with the poet,

"I tremble at myself, and in myself am lost;"

but when we think of what we are to be, "equal to angels," "bearing the image of the heavenly," "like to God," we try in vain to reach up from the depths of

the sinful, suffering, dying life that now is, to the high and glory of that which is to come. Still the promise of godliness was meant to encourage the endeavor, and to spread out before us a vast field of delightful, legitimate, and elevating inquiry and induction in reference to that future life.

Godliness, then, is great gain. Even such an imperfect survey of its revelations and influences fully demonstrates that. It blesses and exalts our present existence, brings our life and immortality to light, and assures to man a perfection and glory second to that of no creature in the universe. It is so great a gain, so vast an acquisition, that with it we are immensely rich, though destitute of all things else.

And without it we are poor indeed, though the whole world acknowledged us proprietor. Yes, we must accept the converse of the Apostle's proposition. As godliness is great gain, so the privation of godliness is great loss, utter and miserable poverty and destitution. To live without God in the world, without prayer, praise, thanksgiving, communion with God in all its acts and aspirations, is wretched poverty in the life that now is, and "everlasting shame and contempt" in that which is to come.

"Exercise thyself," then, "unto godliness." What strong enforcement that precept of the Apostle derives from the contemplation of this subject! *Strip and train* thyself unto godliness. This is the full force of the word he uses. Divest thyself of worldly cares and material incumbrances, and give all thy faculties and affections the full, free, vigorous, wholesome discipline and development of a godly life. The palestra, where bodily exercise is taken, rounds every limb and toughens every fibre of the gymnast, gives fullness, strength,

and symmetry to his whole person. It is "profitable;" but only "for a little." The chaplet it enables him to win must soon fade; the body, to whose strength and beauty it ministers, must soon die. But godliness is a training of the whole man for his whole being. It is good for the body and the present, good for the soul and the future. The crown it prepares us to win will never fade; the life to which it ministers will never die.

The two stages, forms or periods of man's life, are, as we learn from this subject, in perfect harmony with each other. That which is profitable for one is profitable for both. If we could secure the happiness of that future life by the absolute loss and continual sufferings of this, we should make a most advantageous exchange. It is no uncommon thing for men to spend a little in order to gain more, to make even a large outlay in the probable expectation of a larger return. Shrewd and cautious men do this every day, and win a reputation of superior sagacity by the venture. And yet they are often disappointed. The most sagacious and far-seeing are sometimes disappointed of the return, and lose all the outlay they had ventured in the speculation. But here we may have a vast and sure return by no other outlay than the giving of heart and life to God. The gift is itself our highest gain. It fixes our thoughts, hopes and affections on that which calms and satisfies the soul, and gives the sweetest tranquillity, the purest happiness now, while it secures, beyond peradventure, a boundless reversion of glory and felicity hereafter. There are very few things of which it can be said that they are equally for our interest in both worlds; in all possible states of our present and future being. But

this *is* true of godliness. It "hath promise of the life that now is and that which is to come."

We shall derive no small benefit from the contemplation of this subject, if it only imprint distinctly and effectively on our minds the thought that there is to be another life after the present. This is something that we rather assent to than really feel and act upon. It is a notion, rather than an actual operative belief. There is one plain proof of this. When we expect a change of residence or of occupation, we always think much of it, converse and consult with our friends about it, consider and anticipate how this and the other circumstance of change will affect us. But how few think or talk much of the life that is to come! It is thought something strange and almost rude to introduce it suddenly into conversation. No wonder is felt if any one suddenly recur to the probable future beyond our national difficulties. None of us would think of accusing a person of cant, or hypocrisy, or mental unsoundness, or one-sidedness, if in the midst of a conversation on other subjects he should turn to some important intelligence from the war, or state some important views with respect to our condition after it. Because it is felt that this is a great topic; it is one in which all are interested, and therefore is always in order. But if there is "a life to come"—to come surely, to come to all, to come soon, and if we may judge from general experience, to come suddenly; and when it does come, to remain forever; is not that a subject always in order? It is not at all certain that you or I shall be here on earth to witness or partake in the state of things which shall follow our present political agitations, and of course uncertain whether we have any *personal* interest in them. But it is very certain that we have a share,

an infinite interest in the life to come. And it may be, we are just about to enter upon it. When you open the daily journal, one of its columns always tells you that some have entered on that life to come since the last issue. When you look at the seats in your own pew, or at your own table, vacant places remind you that beloved ones who once shared with you the life that now is, have passed before you into that which is to come. Presently, we who linger behind, shall follow. Why, then, should we be averse to think or speak of that which is so real, so certain, so near at hand? Oh! let us not be swallowed up in the thoughts and concerns of "the life that now is," so frail, so miserable at best, so soon to pass away, and be forgetful of "the life which is come," the duration of which is measureless and its conditions unchangeable. Especially since the process is as sweet as the result is blessed and glorious. Godliness, piety, the spiritual worship of God, the principal element of heavenly joy; and along with that, the culture of every habit and affection which constitute present tranquillity and happiness,—temperance, fortitude, contentment, cheerfulness, thankfulness, every thing that elevates, ennobles, and blesses man's present life,—such is the preparation which the Apostle commends to us as the means of securing "glory and honor and immortality" beyond the grave! It is heaven below, to prepare for heaven above. If, then, we can make sure of "the life that is to come," by spending so sweetly and happily "the life that now is," shall we not embrace the double, the infinite blessing?

Finally, how great and noble the work of the Christian ministry! That was what the Apostle had especially in view when he penned these words. They were addressed to a young pastor, and they reveal the true

grandeur and preëminent importance of his work. It deals with man as the heir of two lives—the life now and the life to come. It provides for both; it is profitable for both; it cheers, strengthens and purifies the present, and lifts it up towards the level of the divine and endless future. The profession which occupies itself with mitigating the pains and sheltering the frail germ of this bodily life; that which regulates our social duties, that which deals with our political and international relations, in the interests of peace, order and freedom, that which multiplies and varies the products of the earth, that which draws from its deep mines the precious ores and minerals which minister to human comfort, industry and progress, and that which exchanges the products of distant regions and races—all are useful, all beneficent, all tend to meliorate, civilize, elevate human nature. In truth, we can not deal at all with an immortal being without producing imperishable results. But the Christian ministry alone, of all the professions, directly contemplates man and deals with him as a being who is to live when yonder majestic river has ceased to flow, and these mountain chains are dissolved, and that sun is darkened in his going forth; and all this material system has passed away; and man having gone through the mysterious transfiguration of death, has entered on his final and unchangeable state. It seeks to educate him for that state, to give him the habitudes and associations which will fit him for it, to guard him against the hopeless and everlasting wreck and perdition to which he is liable there, and to guide him to and prepare him for a glorious and happy abode in that life to come. Herein the ministry rises above all comparison with other professions. Herein we magnify our office. When the pastor is at work in

his study, gathering material, or elaborating his public instructions ; when he is speaking from the pulpit “ the words of this life,” when he is seeking to awaken, guide or comfort the individual soul, or carrying the benediction of Christ to the family ; he may ever be cheered and comforted by the thought that he is at work on imperishable materials, and for eternal results. Like that illustrious poet, who when ridiculed for the slow elaboration of his verses, replied, “ Yes, but I work for immortality ;” so may the Christian minister assure himself that whatever he can bring about in the promotion of godliness, it may seem very little, and accomplished with immense labor, but *it will stand forever*.

We can well imagine why Paul breaks forth into such rapturous words when he speaks of his own relations to this ministry. “ The glorious Gospel of the blessed God which was committed unto my trust ! Unto me . . . is this grace given that I should preach ; I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who . . . hath put me into the ministry.”

Such was the work of which he says : “ This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy.” It was to awaken him to the due and earnest fulfillment of this ministry, that he addresses him in such words as these : “ I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom ; Preach the Word ; be instant in season, out of season. Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee. Meditate upon these things ; give thyself wholly to them. Flee youthful lusts. Show thyself a man. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life. Thou, my son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.”

This ministry, beloved and honored young brother,

we now, by the authority which Christ has delegated to his ministers, commit to you. Many of Paul's phrases to Timothy, I can to the letter adopt in speaking to you. I can address you as "My dearly beloved son," "My own son in the faith;" I can "call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother, and thy mother, and I am persuaded that in thee also;" "and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures." I can even go farther, and say, "being mindful of thy tears"—for I witnessed the anguish of your soul in the struggles by which you passed out of the darkness of nature into the marvellous light of the Gospel, and the severer conflicts of your later religious experience. All these recollections highten to me the interest and the joy of this occasion. And now, after an intimacy which has extended, with scarce an interruption, from the first moment of your life to the present hour—an intimacy of that sort which, beyond all others, knits together the thoughts, affections, and sympathies of men; after having trod with you the flowery paths of classic literature, and dug together into the mine of God's holy word; after having shared with you the sweet and fruitful labor of training the young intellect and heart; I see you this evening, in ripe and robust manhood, endowed with rich and various learning, and formed by experience to those habits which are most useful in teaching and governing men, inaugurated to the highest and most important function, I verily believe, which has ever been confided to human hands. I devoutly and thankfully rejoice in the consummation of this hour. I would rather see a youth whom I love yield himself heartily and wholly to God in the ministry of the Gospel, than to see him win the most brilliant prize of genius, wisdom, or valor,

in the sphere of this world. You have yourself indicated this preference by the choice you have made. You have turned aside from the most tempting solicitations of worldly gain and ease, and devoted yourself to those labors which offer no very brilliant prize to ambition or covetousness, but in which you will be a worker together with God, and the faithful discharge of which will bring you honors and rewards which will outlast the fading splendors and transitory fame of earth. May God richly endow you for this ministry! May he cause you greatly to delight in its labors! May he inspire you with a lofty ambition to achieve its highest glories and rewards! See you that crown beaming with heavenly radiance, which the hand of Christ holds forth? See you that vacant seat on his throne? It is for "him that overcometh," for him who is "faithful unto death." Ambition becomes a glorious virtue when it aspires after the divine and eternal. May you and I win those bright distinctions held forth in such mysterious intimations of a now incomprehensible glory, and enjoy them together forever in the kingdom of our Father!