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THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

VOL. XXV.

FEBRUARY-MARCH, 1914.

No. 3.

FOREWORD.

BY THE REV. WALTER W. MOORE, D. D., LL. D.

President of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

The General Assembly which meets in Kansas City next May is to be an Educational Assembly. This number of the UNION SEMINARY REVIEW is an Educational Number. During the next two or three months the Missionary Survey and the weekly Church papers propose to devote much space to the consideration of educational problems. These are all indications of what we believe to be an unprecedented quickening of interest among our ministers and the people in the fundamental and vital work of Christian Education.

This awakening comes none too soon. The Presbyterian Church was once the greatest educational force in this country. She is still a great educational factor, but she has lost her primacy. Other denominations have of late outstripped her. We rejoice in their progress, but it is to our discredit that latterly we have not shown equal wisdom, zeal and enterprise. We have forfeited the leading place in education which was once indisputably ours. We have not even kept abreast of some of our sister churches. We have made some progress, but relatively we have fallen behind.

That the Presbyterian Church should bring up the rear of the procession in educational work is an anomaly not to be endured. Her place is at the head of the column. We, therefore, welcome the signs of the awakening of our people on this

THE TRANSFIGURED LIFE.

BY THE REV. THERON H. RICE, D. D.,

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If my readers will look at the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, the second verse; the twelfth chapter of Romans, the second verse; and the third chapter of Second Corinthians, the eighteenth verse, they will have before their minds the three statements which we are to study in the present paper. Lifted out of their connected words here are the three sentences: (1) "He was transfigured;" (2) "Be ye transformed;" (3) "We are changed." The connection between them may not at once appear. It becomes quite clear, however, when we know that the English words "transfigured," in the first sentence, "transformed," in the second sentence, and "changed," in the third sentence, represent one and the same Greek word in the original text. If we were to translate this one Greek term by the same English word in our three sentences they would read: (1) "He was transfigured;" (2) "Be ye transfigured;" (3) "We are transfigured." And now a connection of a very striking and suggestive character emerges. The first statement was made of our Lord Jesus: "He was transfigured." The second sentence was addressed as a command by Paul to the Roman Christians: "Be ye transfigured." The third statement was made by the same Apostle of those who follow Christ: "We are transfigured." Taken together they present to us the transfigured life; and they present it in three aspects: (1) As an Ideal—"He was transfigured;" (2) As an Obligation—"Be ye transfigured;" (3) As an Attainment—"We are transfigured."

The Transfigured Life as an Ideal.

When our Lord Jesus Christ became a man he laid aside his divine glory. The days of his flesh were "days of humiliation." The glory which was his then was inward and spiritual, it was the glory of his character, the beauty of his flawless obedience

to God's will. To those who discerned this, who felt the perfection of his nature and his whole life, there must have been a strange sense of inconsistency in the outward garb his spirit wore. As they heard the gracious words which provoked the comment, "Never man spake like this man;" as they saw the deeds of power and love which revealed the closest sort of fellowship on his part with God they must have wondered sometimes if the veil that obscured the inward glory would not be rent and Jesus of Nazareth stand revealed to men in an outward and visible splendor in keeping with the glory of his soul.

Well, something very much like that did happen one never to be forgotten night. Jesus and his disciples were spending a while in the beautiful neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi. His mind seems to have been very much occupied with the prospect of his approaching Passion. He had begun to prepare his apostles for his ignominious death. It is entirely possible that his own soul was beginning to be "exceeding sorrowful." It is certain that his disciples were shocked and depressed at his revelation of the approaching cross. For his sake perhaps and certainly for their sakes this great experience was granted. Jesus and the chosen three had ascended some peak whose summit afforded the seclusion Jesus so often sought in the mountains. It is night. The Apostles are heavy with sleep. Jesus is engaged in prayer. And lo, as he prays, the glory of the inner man streams through the veiling flesh, "his face did shine as the sun" and even the encompassing garments "became as white as the light." The three disciples wake and find him so and with him two visitors from the world of glory, Moses and Elijah.

Now what concerns us at present is the fact that our Lord's appearance on this occasion was "a temporary and partial anticipation of the glory that awaited him." Compare the description of his appearance to John on Patmos (Rev. 1:13,14). It was thus the first revelation to men of humanity at its noblest and best, triumphant over all the limitations which we associate with the very thought of human nature, perfect not only in spirit, but in body, humanity as God meant it ultimately to be, humanity glorified! This is why we say that this spectacle presents us with a transfigured life *as our ideal*. It is *our* nature,

our humanity, which shines there transfigured. We are to share in his glory, not only by being made "partakers of his holiness," but "the bodies of our humiliation" being made "like unto the body of his glory" (Phil. 3:21). That transfigured Jesus shines before every one of us as the ideal towards which we may aspire.

The Transfigured Life as an Obligation.

Towards which we *may* aspire? Nay, towards which we *must* aspire. For the New Testament, as we have seen, sets the transfigured life before us not only as an ideal, but also as an obligation. "*Be ye transfigured*" commands the Apostle.

Let us study this aspect of the subject with some care. To do this we must examine Paul's words in their connection. It will be found that this precept is preceded by one of Paul's "Therefore." My readers are doubtless familiar with the use he so frequently makes of this word. It is the bridge on which he passes over from a doctrine to a duty which grows out of that doctrine, from a doctrinal section of an Epistle to the practical section of the Epistle in which the body of doctrine is applied to the guidance of everyday life. Now the great Epistle to the Romans breaks into its two parts at the opening words of the twelfth chapter. All that precedes that is the unfolding of a body of doctrinal truth. This mass of doctrine may be described in general terms as the plan of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Having wrought this out with marvelous clearness and power the Apostle proceeds to apply it as follows: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transfigured" That is to say, "I have set before you clearly the mercies of God as displayed in His saving you by the death of His Son. By those mercies let me entreat you to live the transfigured life."

Let us learn, then, that Paul enjoins this sort of life on those and those only who have received Christ and have been pardoned and accepted in him. He knows that it is futile to enjoin it

upon any others. There are many who would fain attempt the ideal character while ignoring Christ's atoning blood, but for them there is nothing but failure. There is no approach to the transfigured life, but by way of the Cross.

There is a second fact, which Romans 12:2 makes clear and which it is important to recognize. The transfigured life is rooted in a change of heart. "Be ye transfigured by *the renewing of your mind*." The transfigured life is not something built up mechanically from without; it is a life wrought out from within, the expression of a cleansed and renewed nature.

And a third fact which is taught us in the connection is that the transfigured life functions in the commonplace. The phrase "transfigured life" might seem to suggest inaccessible heights, soaring in the empyrean, beyond the reach of every day men and women. We are not left by our Apostle with any such impression. Scan rapidly the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of Romans, to go no farther. Notice how we are to live this transfigured life. Each one of us is to recognize that he is a member of the body of Christ having his own function to perform and then do the duty of his station whatever that may be. Some of those duties are mentioned and they are very homely and practical. We are to be diligent in business, given to hospitality, to provide things honest in the sight of all men, obey our rulers, pay our taxes, help our needy brethren with our money, be patient under trial, cheerful always, condescend to the lowly people all about us, live at peace with all people as far as possible. These are certainly very important things to do, but there is nothing mysterious or unattainable about any of them. And it is in doing such things that the transfigured life finds its expression and development. How important, how supremely important, that we should know this. Who does not know that it is the carrying of the spirit of Christ down into the homely walks of daily life, which is needed to make of this present world a beginning of heaven?

Did any of you ever read the tract: "What's the matter with Murray?" It relates the story of a young bookkeeper who thought himself too busy to go to church and whose pastor suggested to him that he try to serve God in his daily round of

duties, seeing it was the only place that he appeared to have any chance of serving him. Laying the suggestion to heart, Murray began to look out for ways to please his Master which were within his reach at the office. In a few months everybody in that office from head of the firm, down to office boy was asking: "What's the matter with Murray?" He had become so faithful, so unselfish, so thoughtful of others' comfort, so glad to lend a hand at helping others over hard tasks, so cheery and happy-hearted he seemed the sunshine of the office day. He was just carrying the principles of his Christianity unto the little things of his daily life. And we all know that if everybody was doing in his place what Murray did, if every father was the sort of father Christ teaches men to be, every mother the kind of mother Christ teaches mothers to be, every child the child the Bible enjoins children to be, all masters and all servants the kind the New Testament calls on them to be, we should soon have not transfigured lives only but a transfigured world!

The Transfigured Life as an Attainment.

This transfigured life shines before our eyes as an ideal. We are under obligation to be satisfied with nothing short of it and are daily striving to realize the ideal. Is there any assurance that we shall ever attain it? Certainly there is. The same voice which says, "*Be ye transfigured*" says also, "*We are transfigured.*" Paul had been saying of the unbelieving Jews that whenever the Law of Moses was read in their synagogues a veil, as it were, was on their faces so that they could not understand that Law as it revealed Christ. And then turning his attention to the believers who had received Jesus as the Christ he says of them and of himself included among them: "*But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transfigured unto the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.*" That is, as the Christian in daily communion, by prayer and the reading of the Word which reveals him, comes to know his Saviour better, meditates on his person and character, in short gazes upon his glorious image, such a Christian insensibly, unconsciously, but very

surely grows more and more like his Lord, is changed into the same image from glory unto glory.

The change is first of all a change of the inner man. The Spirit of the Christian as it loves and adores more and more its unseen Saviour becomes increasingly Christlike. Gradually the body in which such a soul dwells is affected as if the flesh were shot through and through with the subtle purity and sweetness and beauty of the soul. And in that day for which we wait, when the Lord Jesus shall come again, he "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory" (Phil. 3:21). The Apostle John writes: "Beloved now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (1 John 3:2).

What a prospect! The whole man made perfect: holy in spirit, and with bodies delivered from all infirmity and grossness into a purity, power and beauty resembling Christ's own. Then will our ideal become blessed reality—"the transfigured life" an accomplished fact.