

C

1306

50.30

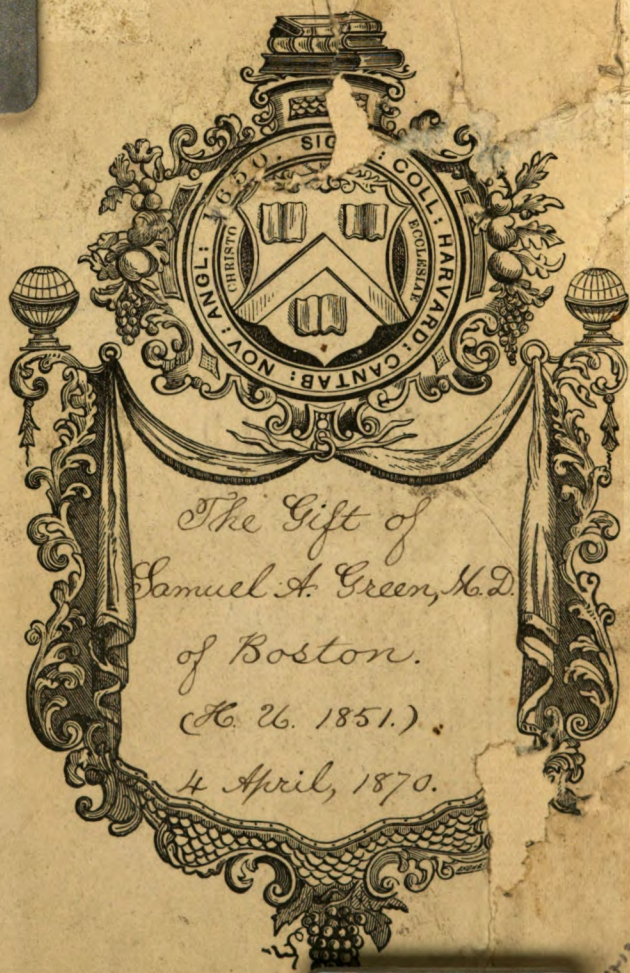
HD WIDENER



HW RLRN I



C 17516.50.30



45

14130
187

②

WE WOULD SEE JESUS.

BY JAMES P. WILSON, D.D.



NEWARK, N. J.:

A. L. DENNIS & BROTHER.

1860.

- 22.87 -

C. 1391. 50. 50

✓

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY

1870, April 4.

Gift of

Saml. A. Green, M.D.

of Boston.

(Feb. 26. 1851.)

157

H

TO
THE CONGREGATION
WORSHIPING IN
The South Park Church, Newark,
THESE THOUGHTS,
UTTERED IN THEIR HEARING,
ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

WE WOULD SEE JESUS.

JOHN XII:21.

Who they were that preferred this request is not known with certainty. This is not the voice of the multitude. Their cry is, "Who will show us any good?" "These men came from the West," Stier says, "at the end of the life of Jesus, to set forth the same as the Magi from the East at its beginning. But they came to the cross of the King, as those to His cradle."

It was not merely to see Jesus. They had no doubt, with thousands of others,

often seen HIM during HIS weary journeyings. But they wanted to have an interview with HIM—to converse with HIM—to be taught by HIM. So,

I.

“We would see Jesus,” the object of our faith, the “Rock of our salvation,” God’s way of taking us to heaven, and saving our souls from death.

We have believed in HIS name, and received HIM in the appointed way, as fully competent to do for us all that we need. It is a great interest that we intrust into HIS hands—the greatest the human soul can ever feel. And so clear and strong is our faith and trust, that we are entirely at rest and peaceful in this calm repose of the soul in HIM. All the suspense and anxiety that beset

the question, how a soul that is guilty may be saved, are fully and clearly met. The difficulty in a governmental aspect, of pardoning one that has been convicted and justly sentenced, and is awaiting the execution of the penalty; and not only of restoring, but highly honoring him; the certainty of securing his obedience, and the gratitude and love of his heart ever after—all this we see fully and perfectly met in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice.

Christ is therefore very precious to us, and when seated at His table, amongst His “chosen ones,” we would see HIM, and have HIM clearly revealed as the object of our Faith and Love.

God and Christ in conjunction are the true and proper object of Faith. The present dispensation is, God manifest

through a Mediator. We know God through Christ, in the covenant of grace, as the spring of all our comfort and joy.

God is not now the object of faith as Creator. HE was so to man at first, in innocence. He that exercises faith in God simply in this aspect, knows not the present condition of human nature, the malignity of his own provocations, nor the glorious perfections, the righteousness, veracity, and justice which are essential to Deity. Man's fall has added another relation to the Creator—that of Judge; and has cut off all pleasant anticipations of peace, and harmony, and happiness, any longer in communion with HIM.

God is the ultimate—Christ the immediate object of faith. In Jesus we see the smiles of God; hear the voice of HIS tenderness and HIS mercy; and feel the

affections of HIS heart. If we look upon God, outside of a Mediator, we are confounded by the terrors of HIS majesty, and alarmed by the certainty and fearfulness of HIS justice. Jesus Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life." We must first come to Christ, to be brought to God.

Jesus is the immediate object of faith in HIS person as God-man. We believe in HIM as God gave HIM. We take HIM in all HIS offices, as a whole, complete Saviour. Our necessities require just what we find in HIM. We are full of guilt and corruption, and we need HIS blood and sacrifice to cleanse us. We are in darkness and ignorance, and we need HIS wisdom to impart certainty to our knowledge—to show us the way, and conduct us in it. We are full of stub-

bornness and rebellion, and we need His power to aid in quelling the enmity of our hearts, and to confer on us strength.

But it is Christ as crucified, that is the more immediate object of our faith and trust. "We would see Jesus," as the "Lamb slain"—the bleeding victim hanging on the cross. This is the aspect that meets us and melts us, as we sit around His table and touch the sacred symbols that set forth this greatest and last act of His life.

HE came to die—to be a sacrifice for human sins. This was the great end that brought HIM into the world. This was His relation to Law. This thought expels fear, and gives us consolation. And it is a realizing view of this that we would have. In this attitude "*We would see Jesus.*"

In the application of the soul to HIM, HIS death comes first—the sacrifice HE has made for sin. The dying Israelite in the wilderness, bitten by the fiery serpent, looked to the life-giving emblem for deliverance. This was the first necessity. And so with a sin-stricken spirit.

When the soul, afterwards, becomes sensible of ignorance and pollution, then it longs for heavenly light and sanctification. But the first application is for deliverance. What is it to me, smitten with a sense of guilt and overwhelmed with horror of conscience, to tell me of the glories of Christ as King on the Throne of the Universe? This strikes me dead. What I want, is to be rid of my guilt—to be saved from wrath to appease justice. It is then, and not till

then, that my soul finds peace. As the only, entire, and constant object of faith, then, "*We would see Jesus.*"

II.

But "we would see Jesus" as the *only foundation of hope*—for Christ formed in the soul, is the only sure confidence of a happy eternity beyond the dark river of Death.

The question of highest importance and of universal concern is, in what shall I rest my hope of an immortal life of joy and peace in that world that lies so close on the confines of this? What certainty have I of safety when drifting out on the wide, dark sea, to return no more? This is the question of all questions, to any rational, reflecting mind, and deeper and intenser interest gathers around it as

time passes away, and departing years scatter the withered leaves along our path, and leave their marks on our brows and in our hearts.

And yet, on what topic are the workings of men's minds and hearts more singular and diversified? By some, reliance is placed on the strictness of their religious opinions; and by others, on the very opposite; deeming error to be innocent, and immorality the only dangerous heresy. Some are mere formalists, and put their dependence in a strict observance of the externals of Religion, adding perhaps family devotions, and a brief interval of daily retirement for reading and prayer.

Others have great hopes in the fervor and excitement of their affections and animal passions in Religion. They tell

of their paroxysms of conviction, and the power of Grace in their conversion. They were moved as by an earthquake, and they have no more reason to call in question their conversion than their existence, and this is the foundation of their hope.

Another may have been melted into tears at the recital of a Saviour's sufferings and wrongs, and great love; and as the message of life fell on his charmed ear in the sanctuary, it was eagerly welcomed, and his soul was taken captive. These are no doubt modes of the Spirit's operation on men's hearts in true conversion; and when found in connection with the effects which they are designed to produce, are a ground of joyful reliance. But still it must not be forgotten that every tear of tenderness does not

flow from so divine a spring. Mere natural human sympathy is easily awakened when solicited by its appropriate object. The strings of the harp are ever ready with responsive tones, when swept by a skillful hand. The same tears might fall almost unbidden, over a well-told tale of tragic interest, as readily, as at the story of a Saviour's deep wrongs, and tears, and agony. And a fine poetical description of a Pagan Elysium, a Mohammedan Paradise, would transport the soul as much as the view of a heavenly Canaan.

These emotions are fleeting and illusory. They may, through sanctifying Grace, lead to Religion, but they are not Religion itself, and are no sure foundation for a hope that will stand when the storms shall beat, and tempests rise.

Even if they be the preparatory movement of the Spirit on the heart, yet, if unimproved, they may leave the soul unblest, and the heart harder than ever.

Some trust in morality; and who will venture to detract from the beauty, or depreciate the worth of a strictly moral life? Where it is not, all claim to piety is mere pretence and hypocrisy. Shall it be said of disciples of the Cross, that they have no tears to shed when sorrow demands the tribute? they are "clouds without rain, wells without water," with grace always on their lips, but never in their hearts? Shall the children of a frigid Philosophy have hands more open and hearts more soft than those of the Cross? And shall it be said, that those who come from her snow-clad mountains are better friends of the unhappy

than they that dwell on the warm hill-side of Calvary ?

But still, Natural Goodness is not Religion, and Morality is not all the Gospel. It lacks "the one thing," and that one thing is the vital principle, the life of the whole.

None of these substitutes will answer the end, and meet the soul's ever-pressing consciousness of need. They are not sufficient ground for rest. "Christ formed in the soul," is the hope, the only "hope of glory." And thus "*we would see Jesus*," as the only foundation of our hope of ever rising and shining with the redeemed on high.

If this is the real state of our mind and affections, then the evidences will not be wanting. We have been unhappy; conviction has made us misera-

ble; and the news of a Saviour welcome. There has been an explicit choice of HIM, and a solemn, deliberate covenant with HIM. The believer anchors his soul on the Righteousness, Atonement, and Intercession of Christ. He is anxious to seat the Redeemer on the throne of his heart, and put in HIS hands the sword and sceptre, that HE may reign there entirely and forever, and then something of the temper and character of the blessed Jesus is wrought there. Divine manifestations have a transforming influence. Like the rock that echoes back the sound; like the river that reflects the sunlight that falls upon it, so the good man in temper and life sets forth God's glory as it shines in the face of Jesus.

This is the true Christian, the man in

whom Christ is found. This is the true rational foundation of a trust that will never make ashamed in time of trial. This is that we covet. "*We would see Jesus*," then, as the only hope of a weary soul tossed on the surges of Time, and panting for rest. *We would have HIM in our hearts*; and if we can thus clearly see HIM, as we come and sit at His table, it strengthens us, and comforts us.

"We would see Jesus—the Great Rock Foundation
Whereon our feet were set by Sovereign grace;
Not life, nor death, with all their agitation,
Can thence remove us, if we see His face!"

III.

But again, "*We would see Jesus*," and enjoy communion with HIM.

In this, the soul finds its natural repose and true rest. There is no pleas-

ure worth the name but this; and for this, the soul of the Christian pines. The value set on the ordinances is, through them as the medium, we have fellowship with the Father and his Son. What joy can be compared with his who can say, I have found HIM, who is "*the way, and the truth, and the life;*" HIM, who is the consolation and shield of earth, and the light and temple, and joy of heaven!

True fellowship with Christ is attended with self-abasing views, and with burning ardor of love. The feeling and utterance are, not an angel's heart, nor even an angel's tongue, can do justice to thy matchless Beauty—thine Infinite Grace. Conscious, realized communion with Jesus, forbids the thought, for a single moment, of ever parting with HIM. Nothing prospective in the pain of a

sick-bed, in the gloom of a dungeon, or in the horrors of the grave itself, is so terrible to the mind as the thought of a *final parting from Christ*.

Well may the Christian be congratulated on such happiness. You have met with a friend, whose favor is better than life. You have found HIM who has "delivered your eyes from tears, your soul from death, and your feet from falling;" Comforter, Physician, Guide. Oh! then, let your spirit utterance breathe forth, "Be not as a stranger, or as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night." Let your heart be filled with His love; your memory with His truths; your mouth with His praise; and your life with His virtues.

HE will ever be the companion of that life, where His example is followed.

HE who makes offer of the salvation-stream will himself take care to fill your empty vessel, for "*HE satisfieth the longing soul with goodness.*" HIS is a life that knows no decay, and insures yours. "*We would see Jesus,*" then, and have fellowship with HIM, constant and abiding.

IV.

"*We would see Jesus,*" for *we would behold the King in HIS beauty.*

Not in HIS holiness underived, mercy inexhaustible, power almighty, and wisdom infinite—those Divine excellences, the lustre of which is too bright even for the cherubim to look upon with open face—the form and fullness of the God-head; but as the Son of Man in the fervor of HIS charity, the devotion of HIS

holy walk, the tender sympathies of His constant, unchanging friendship; in His Spirit, ever so mild and indulgent; in the tones of that voice of lamentation, that has such power to melt the heart.

How deeply affecting, how sublime the demeanor of the Saviour in the midst of the most intense anguish! "Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Here is the instinctive recoil of a human and holy nature—the shrinking of a sensitive soul from anticipated dreadful suffering. And here, too, is the complete resignation of grace; the submission of a holy mind in view of the certain result—God's glory and man's salvation harmonized and secured. This turns the crown of thorns into a diadem of light. How beautiful that counte-

nance, overspread with the paleness of dissolution! Never did death come to any in a form so hideous and appalling, for HE was forsaken both by God and man. And yet, never so attractive as when the cry broke forth from the Saviour's lips, "It is finished," and the echo came back from a thousand death-beds, "O grave, where is thy victory? O Death, where is thy sting? Thanks be to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"*We would see Jesus,*" thus, that the perfection of HIS beauty may demand our whole heart and soul. No creature *can* love HIM to the degree that HIS excellence deserves.

We would see HIS beauty, that our eyes may be turned off from the vanities of a seductive world, and be recon-

ciled to the perishing nature of all earthly attractions. We would have our souls filled with delight in the contemplation of moral beauty; an integrity that no temptation of wealth and a crown could corrupt; a kindness which no ingratitude could chill; a humanity which no elevation could destroy; a purity, which, in the most dissolute age of the world, the foul breath of calumny could not even taint; an unselfish devotion and magnanimity to which human annals never will furnish a parallel; and a beauty that shall, one day, in HIS infinite love, be ours. "For we know that when HE shall appear, we shall be like HIM, for we shall see HIM as HE is."

V.

"We would see Jesus" in the hour of affliction, when the deep waters of sorrow encompass us and we are likely to sink.

There are earthly trials connected with worldly interests of different kinds, inseparable from them, and they are hard to bear. They respect position, personal character, property, reputation. And to those whose souls are centred in these, and have nothing beyond, such reverses are home-strokes, and touch the sources of happiness.

And then, there are bereavements in the family, and in the circle of our friendships; lights, that shone on our path through long years, which we rejoiced to see, and on which, when we

looked, we "took heart again," and pressed on our way—blessings, rich blessings. They are failing every day around us. We would not mourn them, but "*we would see Jesus,*" and go to HIM. There is no other support. Like the sea-bird, driven by the fierce tempest from the bosom of the ocean, the soul flies to HIM for shelter, and folds her weary wing, and finds in HIS love a serene, untroubled deep. If we have HIM sleeping in the boat, unlike the disciples of old, we will not fear, though night and the tempest are around us.

As Christians, all our comforts come from above. Christ does not send HIS people here to the stagnant pools of earth to quench their thirst in the heat and turmoil of conflict. HE does not direct their eyes downwards, but upwards,

to God and Himself. There is no adequate relief in a man's own self, nor in the world. There is nothing outward from which the mind can gather true support. Nothing but *faith in God*, through Christ the Mediator, can bear up the heart in any trouble. This is the ballast that can keep the soul steady in a stormy sea. "Fear not, but believe," said the Saviour, as the proper remedy.

The soul of man, in its emptiness and desolation, ever cries out for God; "Oh! where is God, my Maker, that giveth songs in the night?" If suffering and woes come thick and fast, let the soul spread her wings and take shelter temporarily, in the upper Paradise. Throw in the soft light, the glory, the amplitude, of the celestial mansion as a counterpoise to the darkness and discomfort

of this lower prison. One draught from the river that makes glad the city of God above, can sweeten all the bitterness of the roughest way. Faith "maketh not ashamed." It inspires a courageous temper; it lifts the soul above all ordinary satisfactions of the world and the flesh, in view of the delights of heaven.

Sanctified affliction is the Christian's seal of adoption and title to heaven; and who would forfeit the last for the sake of immunity from the first?

"*We would see Jesus*," then, as the sole and sufficient remedy for every grief of earth, both present and in the future."

Especially would we see HIM in life's most painful, closing hour:

"For the shadows lengthen
Across this little landscape of our life;
We would see Jesus, our weak faith to strengthen
For the last weariness, the final strife."

*"We would see Jesus; this is all we're needing;
Strength, joy, and willingness, come with the sight;
We would see Jesus, dying, risen, pleading.
Then welcome day, and farewell mortal night."*

In the last passing hours of probation, that time of utter physical weakness, and of overmastering dread of what is to come and is just at hand, what remains but to conquer and expel one emotion by the presence of another opposite and more powerful? What, but to meet the fear of death with a conscious appropriation of the love of Christ, and through this, obtain the victory? Who, when my heart dies within me, and I have to face death, who will come to my bedside and read to me a full and free pardon from the Eternal Executive, and set my soul at rest?

He has the "keys of death and hell,"
Lord of death and the unseen world;

through HIM alone is the victory. Philosophy can offer nothing. Reason is a dumb oracle. Stoical apathy or indifference may be calmness, but it is not triumph. JESUS OUR KING conquered this last enemy. Age after age, the gifted, the good, the brave, and the beautiful, had gone down, but none came back. Earth waited long and held down her ear and listened, but no murmur rose from the tomb. Not the wail of millions of broken hearts, nor the cry from desolate hearths, nor "hero's lyre, nor lover's lute," could waken a solitary echo in those silent realms. One was needed to come as a *witness* from the grave; but Death was too strong. At length One mightier than he trod those dark vales, and came back, wearing on

HIS marble brow the victor's wreath,
and brought immortality to light.

Before Christ died, Death was the servant of Divine justice. But now, he is a messenger of mercy—once the keeper of the cold dungeons of the tomb; but now, the conductor of the willing spirit to the skies. When God's peace is diffused over the soul, and HIS face shines without the passing shadow of a cloud, the word "*Death*" may be terrible, but the reconciled mind is beyond its power. "*We would see Jesus*," then, in life's last solemn hour; so solemn, because it is the last.

VI.

"*We would see our Jesus*," in heaven,
in glory, forever.

Without HIM, it would not be heaven.

HE is all that is needed there to make the perfect bliss of that upper shore. HE is its beauty, its charm, its essence, its security. What would the Throne be if the Lamb were not in the midst of it "as it had been slain?" What would the Paradise of God be if the tree of life were not in it? And what the living fountains of waters, if the Lamb did not lead us to them, and beside them?

Just men made perfect, angels shining in glory, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers—ye are not our Saviour—ye are not our heaven. Jesus is our light, our joy, our all.

Impenitent soul! This Incarnate One came not to a banquet, not to a triumphal march, heralded through our world, and deified by men. No! HE came rejected, reviled, abandoned both by God

and man, a weary, weeping, bleeding, dying Saviour, FOR YOU. Only thus could HE benefit your soul. HE must go down into the pit to find you. We would have you "see" HIM; that is, follow HIM. Press through the crowd and reach HIM; fall down before HIM; be in earnest, and you shall be welcome.

FINIS.

235-6

J



