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THE

# METROPOLITAN PULPIT,

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*Edited by I. K. FUNK.*

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VOL. I.

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1877.

*"I like to gather hints about preaching from all quarters. . . . We ought always to examine and analyze sermons which draw people together."*—J. C. RYLE.

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*"Abstracts, abridgments, summaries have the same use with the burning-glass, to collect the diffused rays of wit and learning in authors, and make them point with warmth and quickness upon the reader's imagination."*—DEAN SWIFT.

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# THE METROPOLITAN PULPIT.

Vol. I.

No. 2.

Rev. I. K. FUNK, Editor.

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## GOD'S IMAGE IN MAN; OR, EVOLUTION CONSIDERED.

OUTLINES OF A SERMON BY J. H. RYLANCE, D.D., IN ST. MARK'S [EPISCOPAL] CHURCH, NEW YORK.

*God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.—Gen. i : 27.*

Many of us have been interested in, and some of us have been edified by, the discussion of a branch of natural science by a gentleman lately on a visit to this country from England, whose name and fame had preceded him hither. It was not unnatural, considering the possible application of some of the facts and inferences which he has labored so industriously to disseminate as a master in the schools of physical philosophy, that a fear should have gone abroad in the religious world that his public deliverances in this country would work mischief to the interests of the Christian faith. Yet it must in fairness be conceded, that he has offered no reckless insult to the most delicate feeling of devout people during his brief visit among us. It would be worse than useless to attempt to repress such discussions, while to answer the well-considered utterances of science by theological invective is simply to expose theology to the reproaches of all dispassionate and fair-minded men. We may regret that there should be occasion for disturbing traditional beliefs; but we must remember that the scientist does not *create* the occasion; he simply *finds* it, if he is honest, in the pathway of his professional calling; and it is to repay good service with insult to call him hard or offensive names. For good service it is surely to be esteemed, for men to "scorn delights and live laborious days" in deciphering the wonderful records of nature, and in bringing to light the hidden things of God's marvelous wisdom and power. Nor need we fear the results of the profoundest or widest explorations of such sort. The unity of all truth will surely assert itself, within the limits of the human understanding, in proportion as the alleged facts are true, and the inferences and generalizations correct. It may be that the naturalist, compelled to review his conclusions, will have to modify some and substitute others for here and there one discredited; while the theologian may have to resort to new readings or interpretations of certain passages in his sacred books. But such things have happened already without serious shock to the faith of Christendom. I should advise, therefore, that at this stage of the controversy between evolution and theology, we refuse to yield to alarm.

Having been thus frank and conciliatory in one direction, I shall not expose myself to

scorn of the candid, if I drop some qualifying hints in another. Let us bear in mind, then, that the utterances of any individual or collective authority are worth no more than the measure of truth they may be shown to contain. To the extent that they are merely fragmentary, tentative, hypothetical, or merely gropings in the dark, we may legitimately hold belief in suspense, at least; while if they are mutually contradictory, or are contradicted by authorities in the same field of equal eminence, we may justly deny them all serious claims upon our assent. The *facts* of science are one thing, while the *philosophy* of the facts is altogether a different thing. Logic, at least, or the right use of reason in quest of truth, is the special prerogative of no one school or profession, and any one, therefore, having the necessary knowledge of the facts and discernment of their bearings and value, may venture, without permit, to question, when just occasion shall call, the infallibility of those who speak *ex cathedra*.

But a far more important thing to remember, or point to be vindicated, if need be, is this: That the hypothesis of evolution, if verified down to all its essential details, can never supply the materials of a valid contradiction of the fundamental truths of religion. Say that it can be proved, or has been proved (which is an enormous concession), that man is simply the last and highest results of the occult forces, or force operating in nature; that his immediate ancestor was an ape, and his earliest, sea slime or cosmic gas; or say, limiting his pedigree with Mr. Darwin, that there may have been two or three primitive types of animated things of which we are the *remote* descendants; yet, as a fact, whatever or however numerous the intermediate steps or transmutations may have been, man is now what he is, and what he is we know. His intelligence is indefinitely progressive, his affections can be incited by an ideal beauty and goodness, his conscience responds to moral distinctions. He is not passive as other dust, but active, free, and accountable. He is the subject of marvelous emotions—hope, fear, joy, sorrow—while his aspirations outrun all realizations. He has a sense of kinship and obligation in him to others, subjecting himself to service and self-sacrifice often, which have no justification in the computations of utilitarianism. He has capacities in him for wonder, awe, reverence, worship; is, in a word, a religious animal, do what we will to extirpate such qualities. Man is all this, and a great deal more than words can indicate. He is the crown and glory of creation as known to us. Everything else in nature is servile to him. "This goodly frame, the earth, seems" but "a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this

ness and the moral sense. In brief, whatever the law may have effected in the lower spheres of nature, when it encountered man it was crossed and arrested by the higher forces of intelligence and moral power. He has ever stood, and he everwhere stands, conspicuously alone, as the lord of the lower creation, in virtue of those supreme powers of mind, which could never have been inherited *from below*, but which must have come *from above*, even from the infinite and all creating MIND, in whose "image" he was made.

Let evolutionists, therefore, be modest for the time. Their theory, as yet, is little more than a stupendous guess. We have inarticulate hints or fragmentary installments upon which they pile their ponderous conclusions with an audacity which imposes upon the multitude, but which men of first-rate scientific ability have exposed and rebuked. Let them at least refrain from calling those who presume to question their conclusions by such unscientific names as "speculative idiots." It may be that evolution is as well attested as the solutions of Copernicus in astronomy. But let us not be imposed upon by such bold words. There are theories of evolution, *and* theories of evolution. If it be meant, simply, that certain changes in animal organizations, within certain limits, have been verified beyond doubt, to that we assent. But if it be meant that the theory which professes to trace up the pedigree of a human soul to a "gelatinous mass," and which claims that it can dispense with a God, has been so verified, then we may be bold to say that the claim is licentiously untrue.

### HEAVEN.

OUTLINES OF A SERMON BY HOWARD CROSBY, D.D., IN THE FOURTH AVE. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK.

*I go to prepare a place for you.*—John xiv : 2.

THESE are the words of the Son of God, and are addressed to his disciples. They have a different sound from the language of the rocks that science is so fond of. There is more comfort to the soul in these words than in all the rocks from the Silurian to the post-tertiary a million times over. Science may feed the curiosity, but can never give rest to the spirit. *That* can come only from the word of God. "But," say the scientists, "all this religion of yours is mere rapture—a nervous sentimentalism; there is no truth in it; only science can furnish truth." To which we answer, if you mean by science the study of material objects, then you are altogether astray in your assertion, and your own lives prove it. You are daily doing things on evidence that has no material basis whatever. You are living far more in the world of affections than in the world of matter. Your domestic and social relations have a material character that is variable, while those relations themselves are constant, and hence not dependent on material objects, and so your natural science cannot help you at all in analyzing your true relations to your children and friends, while you unhesitatingly pronounce those relations true. So you see that something besides science

can furnish truth. Now, if you mean by science *all orderly and reasonable explorations into truth*, then you are right, and only science can furnish truth, and the words of Jesus, that we have taken as our text, come to us as the words of the Son of God, in the most scientific way.

The life and work of Jesus are the most fully evidenced of all facts that ever occurred on our earth. Alexander, Cæsar, and Charlemagne are more readily believed to be myths than is Christ. Not only does history record most minutely the story of his miracles and teachings, but the tradition is crystalized into a church that numbers nearly one-half the population of the globe. No flaw can be suggested either in the history or the enacted tradition. The evidence here is no more to be disputed than the evidence of the existence of Mohammed and of the authenticity of his great book, the Koran. Then, when we have the life and work of Jesus before us, his divine character shines out with clearest rays. We learn to trust his word to us, just as we learn to trust a life-long, a well-tried friend, whose very soul we know. There is no room anywhere for mistake. We have no mere system of rules like those which form the staple of the so-called holy books of the pagans and Mohammedans, but we have a *life* all sparkling with the holy beauty, drawing the soul to it by cords of love. We learn and trust that life implicitly, and take its words as Heaven's own. All prophecy converges in him; all history concentrates in him. He fulfills every requisite of the soul, as the soul's saviour and sanctifier, and he cries to a suffering world, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." His character and his words are fitly accompanied by miraculous powers, testifying to his divine mission, and all that man's evil heart could do to evade the force of all this testimony, was—to deny the facts? No! That was a later invention; but to ascribe the whole thing to the devil—ascibe the most spotless and loving life ever saw to the great father of sin and shame!

Now, we say to the scientists, that this, our trust in Jesus, is the result of a true and perfect science, built upon precisely the same principle of evidence that they use in arranging and classifying their material phenomena, and that fancy and sentimentalism have nothing whatever to do with it. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was with God and was God as the eternal word, *has* stood upon our earth, and *has* said to poor, heart-worn sinners, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" and he has said to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you," and this is just as clear as day, a thousand times clearer, than the presence of the *invertebra* in the carboniferous period. It is only the wildest credulity that would believe either false. It is not we Christians, but the unbelievers in our God, who follow cunningly-devised fables, and are open to the charge of superstition, believing their own vagaries rather than evidenced facts.

We go back then to our text. We hear the Son of God, just before leaving his beloved disciples, comforting them as representatives of all who love him, by saying—"Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me"—that is, put your confidence in me

exactly as you do in God. Let God and Christ be convertible terms. "In my Father's house are many mansions (abodes); if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you," etc. What a fullness of comfort was contained in this! The view reaches into the eternal future, and finds only peace and joy. But let us look at some of the special features of this declaration of the text, "I go to prepare a place for you."

1. "I go." It was expedient (says Christ elsewhere) for his disciples that he should go away. The coming of the helper or comforter depended on his going. We may not understand all the reasons, or perhaps the main reasons, why, in the economics of heaven, this necessity existed; but we can surmise one reason. We may believe that Christ would be much nearer his disciples when absent in the body. The bodily senses sometimes hinder the appreciation of truth. The artist's ideal is always more perfect than his canvas. The Christian's view of Jesus, when not seeing him in the flesh (visible familiarity might beget blindness) is far deeper and broader and higher and truer than the beholding him with the physical sense; friends who have left us for the prepared home are nearer and dearer to us than ever; the heart recognizes and understands them better than ever before, and this power suggests their spiritual presence as a complementary fact. Our Lord told his disciples that he would be with them personally and really, though unseen. May it not be true—is it not likely—that all the Lord's redeemed and glorified ones come personally and really, though unseen and unnoticed by any material sense, into the society of those with whom affection has indissolubly joined them? They would only in this be followers of their Lord, who is their forerunner and example. "But why do they not communicate with us?" Because, (1) Spirit and sense *cannot* communicate, and our own spirits are too clogged with sense to know the free spiritual communication; (2) A free communication with the other world would take away our interest in this world's necessary duties; while (3) on the other hand, it would beget so great a familiarity with the other world as to diminish its influence upon our lives and characters. When our Lord said, "I go," he also added, "The world seeth me no more, but ye see me, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you." His going was only the going of the flesh, perceived by the sense. In the truest and most real sense, he was not about to leave them.

2. "To prepare." "I go to prepare." There is order in God's universe. There are first and second and third; there are cause and effect. There was a reason why the Messiah appeared not immediately after sin appeared, but 4,000 years later; and there is a reason why his second coming is delayed. There is no delay like man's delay—from weakness. The necessary preparations are going on for the glorious consummation. Christ's work has not ceased. His glory is his grace, and he guides all things in his providence for the full development of that grace. We know nothing of the detailed character of the work he is performing in heaven. We only

know he is *preparing a place* for his own, that he is in the presence of God for us, and that he ever lives to *make intercession for us*. Something has to be done in the other world before we can go there. We cannot imagine how or in what respect the place is prepared, because we can have no conception of the contents of the other world. All we can know is, that preparation is being made, and that Christ is making it.

3. "I go to prepare a place for you." We are accustomed to say that space and time are conditions only of our finite and composite natures. Whether this be so or not no man can tell. It is a transcendentalism that it is folly to talk about. Time and sense are absolute necessities to our thinking. Every conception of our minds is formed on these as a foundation, and we can have no idea of God himself except as in time and space. Hence we must, whether we will or no, take the word "place" in our text literally. Even if it be not literally a place, we must *think of it as a place*, for we cannot think of it in any other way. Nor did Christ say, simply, "I go to prepare for you."

What a place that must be which Christ prepares! It must be a place where every purified desire of the heart shall have perpetual satisfaction. The inner soul longs for happiness; it is only the outward and changeable sense that would dictate its form. That it is a pure and holy place and that it has Christ in it, is enough. We know the delicious contents of the vessel, if we do not know the shape and color of the vessel.

What a comfort and joy the thought, that Christ is preparing our place. God's consolations are not like men's, mere soothers of a troubled mind, but seeds of positive and independent joy. God's grace comes with a set-off that belittles the earthly care and sorrow. If a soldier in the ranks is wounded, it is one thing to apply soothing cataplasms to stay the pain; but it is a grander thing and a better thing for his general to come to him and bestow upon him the title, rank, and insignia of a high officer. "To depart" is "to be with Christ;" this is the "*far better*" of the apostle.

### CHRIST AS INTERCESSOR.

OUTLINES OF A SERMON BY A. C. WEDEKIND, D.D., IN ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH, NEW YORK.

*But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood, etc.—Heb. vii: 24, 25.*

This blessed office of our Saviour belongs to his priestly functions. It rests on his atoning sacrifice; and makes that blessed work performed on earth for the sins of men, still actively and really available before the Father in heaven. It was prefigured by the high priest in the Jewish church, who, on the day of atonement, appeared before the Lord in the holy of holies, and presented there the blood of atonement for the sins of the people. Our High Priest is not content merely in silence to await the effect of his satisfaction, but, without any detriment to his majesty, really and effectively avails himself of his merits with the Father, to secure for his followers all the benefits of his atoning sacrifice.