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## THE BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH.

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United States.*

In responding to the invitation to write upon the subject of "The Business of the Church," it is worth while to avail one's self of the limitations of the subject. We assume that we may omit any consideration of the technical definitions of the church; the outstanding characteristics, or "marks" of the church; its spiritual equipment; its past history, and its great mission through the years to come.

The whole question narrows down to the interesting, important, and extremely practical question—"What does Jesus Christ want us who are in His church to do today?"

What is the present task of the church in our country? This inquiry must contemplate the church in the general sense in which that term is used, including all the Protestant Evangelical bodies in our land.

The present task of the church calls upon us to consider how it is related to the people of God themselves. The work of the church in this regard is to gather them out of the world, to nourish and strengthen them, and to inspire them to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world."

As the work of the church relates to what is known as the "world," that is, the unregenerate mass about us, its duty is to evangelize and save as many as possible, and to season and

TEACHINGS OF GREAT FEATURES OF THE  
BIBLE.\*

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It is almost superfluous to say that anyone who proposes to treat the Bible as a whole finds himself in a very embarrassment of riches, for no book that men have known can compare with this. It is instinct with features that mark it out as pre-eminent and unique among the world's myriad of books. It bristles with subjects that have made libraries and will make many more. Think of the *languages* of the Bible: the picturesque Hebrew and the finished Greek, each fitted for the stages of revelation it was commissioned to record. What masterly genius and prodigious industry have focussed on its very text! Think of the *writers* of the Bible: selected from all grades of temperament, environment, occupation to give to men the message of the Most High. Where can another forty men be found to speak forth as did these? Think of the great length of time this Bible was in writing: nearly a thousand years for the Old Testament, then, after four silent centuries had intervened, the fifty years of the New. A millennium and a half stretching between the days of Moses and the days of John! Was ever book so written? Think of the *literary pre-eminence* of the Bible: so clear and undisputed that the masters in literature have acknowledged themselves the grateful pupils of it. Can any other book lay claim to such supremacy? Think of the *translation* of the Bible: begun nearly three hundred years before Christ and continuing still; men of 700 languages and dialects reading it now as a result of this long and unremitting service. Has any other book on earth pressed across so many barriers of human speech? Think of the wide

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*circulation* of the Bible: acknowledged to be the best seller by far in the great department stores of the land; nearly 100,000,000 copies, complete or in portions, having been issued by the American Bible Society alone during its ninety-seven years of life. What single book is so widely read to-day? Think of the *romantic history* of the Bible: passing through all the horrors of siege and sack and desolation and through all the greater trials of apostasy and the fierce assaults of criticism, yet preserved by a higher than human hand for a higher than human service. What book, if it could speak, could have such marvels of truth to tell? Think of the *influence* of the Bible: in bearing the words of life to individuals whom no man can number; in shaping the life of communities, states, nations; in rescuing the world from utter shame. What book has gone with such blessing to successive generations? Tremendously interesting lines of study, but limitation of time compels us to pass them by and confine our attention to four features of the book, of equal interest and importance.

I. The first of these to be noted is *the fact of the Bible itself*; the very existence of a book in which God has put to record His wondrous revelation.

There is rich suggestiveness in the two names most commonly applied to this sacred book. One is the name "Bible." The derivation and history of the word unite to make it interesting. The remote ancestor of our word "Bible" is the Greek "Biblos," which meant the outer coat of the papyrus reed. That takes us back to the material on which our most ancient books were written, papyrus, from which comes our word "paper." From "Biblos" it was an easy step, when books were small, to the diminutive "biblios," "little book," and to the plural "biblia," "little books." In this form it was carried from the Greek over into the Latin, but "biblia" in Latin might be either the neuter plural or the feminine singular: either "books" or "book." Gradually the singular won the field, in recognition of the unity of the book. The history of the word is chiefly interesting from the fact that in its two uses we have the twofold conception of the Bible. It is plural: many books, a collection of books, "a divine library." But it is singular also! it is one book made up

of many parts, dominated by one theme, inspired by one Spirit, heading for one goal; the older half pointing forward to and preparing for the newer half and reaching in it a glorious fulfilment as the whole stands forth complete.

The second name for this book is the word "scriptures". It means "writings." And thus the two names for this book—the word "Bible", going back to the material on which writing was done, and the word "scriptures", suggesting the process of writing and the product, the writings themselves—are at one with the fact of the book itself in stamping the true religion as one of the book-religions of the world. Consider if you will the vast significance of that fact. There have been religions in the world that had no books. The religion of the American Indians is of such a character. There was likewise a time in the history of redemption when it lacked a written record of its revelations of the nature of God and the duties of men. This was in the long centuries that stretched between Adam and Moses. Moreover, there have been other religions than the true religion to boast their sacred books. The Egyptians have had their "Book of the Dead;" the Zoroastrians their Zendavestas; the Brahmans their Vedas; the Confucianists their "Analects;" the Moham-medans their Koran; the Mormons the transcription of their golden plates. The vast significance of the Bible lies not in the mere fact that we have a written record in our hands. Others have that. It lies in the fact that we have *God's* written record in our hands. It lies in the fact that His revelations have been put down in writing, when if He had chosen so to do they might have been left unwritten. It lies in the fact that what God has wished men to know concerning His nature and purposes and their duties and privileges He has put into written words and words so plain that all who will may read. The wondrous messages of grace, passed down by word of mouth so long as chosen individuals and then an eastern family were custodians, passed into written form when the family had grown into tribes and the tribes were consolidating into a nation and the nation, as the guardian of so sacred a deposit, was about to possess its promised land and enter on its wide mission as the priestly nation of the earth. As the generations should come and go the written

word would receive its priceless additions. Through the days of peace and war, through the periods of isolation from other nations and then of contact and of hurtful alliance with them, through the eras of prosperity and of desolation, through times of alternating fidelity and apostasy, the riches of the written word were made the increasing treasures of a people to whom had been committed the oracles of God. And then He came for whom all history preceding was a preparation; and though He wrote no line of all we have, He commissioned chosen men to speak for Him and about Him and lay thus the foundations of the world-wide kingdom of the Spirit. The century that saw this done saw also the dissolution of the Jewish state, the dispersion everywhere of the heralds of the cross and the dissemination through them or their disciples of the completed scriptures in the varied tongues of men.

This, this is the fact that we should weigh with more than golden measures: that God's will for our salvation, His one authentic revelation of Himself, and of His purposes and of His promises, to man, has come down to us, not in floating legend, not even in compact and reliable tradition, but *in writing*. How easily it might have been otherwise had God willed it so! Today great caravans of pilgrims might be traveling to some bleak and distant monastery where only the accredited few could enter in order to learn the truth passed down the centuries, while many millions would have to be content never to catch sight of the faces of the men who guard the word or the place that is hallowed by its presence. But not thus our God has ordered. The word was not only a spoken word. It was and is a written word, definite, precise, final; translated into every important tongue and circulated in the cheapest books that issue from the presses of the world today. What reasons here for deep stirrings of soul! The very fact that this is a revelation written should show us how important God considered this revelation to be. It was of such surpassing importance that He had it written down for us. His interest in us, His concern for us, in these eternal matters, was so great that He could not leave us to hopeless guess-work. He must show us plainly His will for us and His measures for bringing the sin-blinded and wayward

children of men back to the paths of truth and safety and life. Surely, if God considered this of such vast importance, so should we. If He has thus shown such great interest in our lives, and such concern that they should be lived for high destinies, we ourselves should be profoundly interested and concerned. If His supreme purpose in it all is to bring us savingly back to Him our supreme delight it should be to respond to these overtures of grace. What motives for grateful thanksgiving and for deepening consecration in the fact that this vital, wondrous word has come to us in readable, accessible, usable form, phrased in the speech of our common life, glowing with the light of the Most High and pulsing with the power that makes men new creations in Christ Jesus and transforms the world!

II. This leads us to the consideration of a second feature of this book: *the omissions of the Bible*, or the limitations placed upon its writers by the Spirit who inspired them.

The Bible, as all concede, is remarkable for what it contains. Let it be added that it is only less remarkable for what it omits. It is remarkable for what it states. It is only less remarkable for what it does not even attempt to state. The writer of Genesis, for example, does not stop to argue the existence of God. He begins his sublime record with the impressive, stately sentence: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." He does not attempt to explain the ultimate origin of sin or the career of Satan prior to his tempting of the human race—questions that have taxed the thinking of the wisest of men down all the ages. He states only enough to show the entrance of sin into the race and the agency of Satan in bringing it to pass. The time of Abraham has been shown by recent discovery to be one of high civilization and widespread culture. Kingdoms were consolidating into empires, at least one famous code of law was being framed, commercial life was quickening, libraries were being founded, great buildings were under construction. Ur of the Chaldees from which the father of the Hebrews came was itself an important capital, a famous sea-port, and the seat of a worship whose votaries were to be found up and down the Euphrates Valley. Yet all of this story is passed by while the Biblical history concerns itself with the career of a simple, yet noble

life of a man of faith and God's transactions with him. Moses lived in the blaze of Egyptian civilization. It was with Egypt a day of massive art and extensive learning, "and he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." It was with Egypt a day of great wars and mighty conquests. History was being made in the land in which this man lived. Yet all this is passed by, and the only mention of the far-famed Pharaohs of his time is made merely to show their relation to the chosen people and their defeat at the hands of God. Isaiah lived in stirring times. The mightiest ruler that Assyria ever boasted was one of his contemporaries. Libraries containing thousands of volumes and great palaces covering acres of ground and adorned with marvels of sculpture were part of the glory of the time. The fame of doughty warriors and the tread and shock of armies kept the world of his day in awe. Yet these are all passed over except in so far as they are connected immediately with the history of the insignificant and despised nation to the west. Augustus Caesar made a great stir in the world of his day. A succession of events changed the republic into the empire of Rome and made him its first emperor. Wide commerce, wealth, luxury, immorality, massive structures, marked the time. Virgil was writing his *Aeneid*, Horace was composing his odes, Ovid was charming the lovers of literature by his poems, Livy was writing his famous history. Rome was at the pinnacle of an outward glory that historians down to today delight to dwell upon as distinguishing the Augustan Age. In the Bible not one of these literati is mentioned and the first man of his time politically, the lordly Augustus himself, finds mention only once, and that in connection with an enrolment for taxation that brought Joseph and Mary to the little town of Bethlehem and made it thus the birth-place of the Christ. Nero, the last of the family line of the Caesars, filled the world of his time with the shame of his transactions and bulks ignobly large in any history of the age. He is not mentioned by name in all the scripture, though we have more information concerning Paul, his really great contemporary, than concerning any character of the New Testament, with the one exception of Christ himself. Ancient histories, so far as they have been preserved to us, tell of palaces

and temples, and oriental courts, and battles and sieges, and heroic exploits, and rescues by the gods, and the number and treatment of captives, less concerning literature and the fine arts and almost nothing concerning the daily life of the people. The Bible tells of sin and grace and redemption, of repentance and the rescue and upbuilding of souls, of the exercise of faith and the lives of believing men, of spiritual conquests, of hope and love, of joy and peace, of the blessedness of service, of the coming of the kingdom into the heart and throughout the world.

In brief, the Bible does not pretend to be a text-book on secular topics. It does not attempt to teach us Mathematics, Astronomy, Geometry, Geography, the plastic or the graphic arts, oratory, statecraft, literature, farming and horticulture, music and painting. It does not so much as pretend to trace for us the great movements of history except in so far as they have essential bearing on its main topic: Redemption. It is true, indeed, that some of these things are mentioned in the Bible. It is true that there is close accordance along general lines between Genesis and Geology, and that when events in history are given they are accurately given, as investigators are amply showing. But the dominant purpose of the book must always be kept in mind. The Bible, from beginning to end, is a book of religion. It teaches us, and is intended to teach us, primarily and principally, "What man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man." Everything is made to contribute to that end. What is included is included for that purpose. What is omitted is omitted because not needed to make that purpose clear. Truly this book is unlike any other that the world knows.

This fact of the omissions of the Bible leads out to conclusions of vital value to us. If the book omits much that the world counts of first importance and thus, by vivid contrast, emphasizes much that the world reckons of little or no value, it thereby shows the need of a readjustment of the world's standards of measurement. They are oftentimes wholly wrong. They are sometimes an abomination in the sight of God. If this be true, we need to get our estimate of values, not from the world but from God.



To do otherwise is folly, and that of an eternally costly kind. If life would be guided aright, if its allotted tasks would be accomplished, if its high ends would be achieved, it must follow, not the rush-lights of the world, but the great beacon-lights of God's written revelation. But not all omissions from this book are omissions of what is in itself unworthy. Some are omissions of what is unessential. Things not unimportant in themselves are yet surpassed in importance by what is included here. If this be true, then to these things God here reveals we should pay the utmost heed. What God emphasizes, we should emphasize. What He places first we should place first. Nor are we left in this to a good and necessary inference from the contents and omissions of the Bible. Christ the Living Word spoke it so plainly that none might miss it: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." No trifling here, but the lifting aloft as in letters of fire of that which makes character and shapes destiny.

III. We pass to the consideration of a third feature of this book: *the practically endless variety of the Bible.*

The arrangement of the English Version gives us for the Old Testament seventeen books of history, five of poetry and seventeen of prophecy, and for the New Testament four gospels, one history of the Christian church, twenty-one epistles and one book of visions. This in itself would indicate quite a variety in a book that equal about four modern-day novels of 600 pages each. But this by no means tells the whole story. The historical books include several types of history: mere annals; vivid description; rich biography. They likewise include great codes of law, moral, civil and ceremonial; all this, besides snatches of song, odes of war, fervent prayers. The poetical books include several types of poetry: lyric, in the Book of Psalms particularly; dramatic, in the Book of Job and the Song of Songs; didactic, in the Book of Proverbs; and if not epic, certainly epic elements in more than one of the great poems within and outside the poetical books proper. The prophetic books include all types of prophecy, ranging in authorship from those of the polished Isaiah of the capital and court to those of the colloquial and forceful Amos, plain laborer in woods and fields; and in theme

from the glowingly Messianic to the intensely pressing questions of the hour. The Gospels have one central figure, but with differing treatment. Matthew tells of Christ as the Messianic King; Mark, of Christ as the strong Son of God; Luke, of Christ, as the divine Son of Man; John, of Christ as the Word of God, revealing the Father in Himself as well as in His works. The epistles show a marvelous variety: some of them are personal, like Philippians and Philemon; some of them are grandly doctrinal, like Galatians and Romans; some of them are ecclesiastical, like those to Timothy and Titus; some of them are written to babes in Christ, like I and II Thessalonians; and some to full-grown men in Christ, like that to saints in Ephesus. And what variety even in the closing book of visions, described by Milton as "the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies!" Variety we find everywhere in God's other book, the Book of Nature. How easily He could have made this world one monotonous plain, as level and uninteresting as a floor; but instead of this, wide oceans and rock-ribbed continents, mountains, valleys, rolling table-lands, rivers, fields, lakes, forests; differences in climate, harmonious colors, myriad forms of life. A like variety we find in the highest of created beings, man himself; each like his neighbor, yet each differing from each in many ways. What God has wrought in the world of Nature and of human nature He has wrought in the world of scripture: a marvelous variety. If we ask how this has been brought to pass within such relatively narrow limits we shall perhaps find partial answer in two providential arrangements. The land in which many of these writers lived, with its succession of sea coast, plains, mountains, valleys, lakes and walls of deserts; its range of climates, from torrid heat to everlasting snows; and its compass of animal life and products corresponding; is more varied than any land of its size on earth; and the history through which the race passed in the great length of years this book covers, primitive, patriarchal, national, exile, restoration, and final dispersion, is no less varied than the land. The Jew, once he appeared upon the scene, lived on while the nations that helped to make his

history the tragedy that it was disappeared and were forgotten one by one. Back of this, of course, stand the purpose of God and His use of men who differed to bear His message to the world. But however caused, the fact of this variety is beyond all question.

The surpassing excellence of these varied types of literature is quite as obvious and striking. Is any history at once so simple and so sublime as the oratorio of creation? Does any short story in the language rival the true story of Joseph, of Ruth, of Esther? Is there anything in philosophy to match the stately marchings of the Book of Job? Is there poetry elsewhere to be compared for depth of feeling with the Book of Psalms or in any other way with the creations of the regal Isaiah? Is there in all the world beside a biography like that which Luke has written of our Lord? Have we outside the scripture a book of logic comparable at all to the masterful Epistle to the Romans? Men have seen visions and dreamed dreams, but have they left such a book of visions as the Revelation of John?

But more to be regarded than the excellence of these varied types of literature is the purpose of their presence within this sacred book. Literature was not the end, but only the means to the higher end of conveying to us the will of God for our salvation. The history of the Bible is the history of redemption. Its philosophy is the philosophy that brings the heart to distrust of self and trust in God. Its poetry is the poetry that lifts the soul into the presence and the strength of the Eternal. Its biography is the biography of men who have linked their ways with God and of the Sinless One who as the Word declared Him. Its logic is the logic that drives the sinner to the one refuge of atonement by the blood. Its visions are the visions of the new heavens and the new earth, unmarred, unmarked by sin, that stretch beyond this often shadowed world.

This book being what it is, we are not surprised to find that it has made appeal to all types of men in all stages of their growth. Sage and savage, prince and peasant, saint and sceptic, men with the snows of age upon them and others with the dew of youth, and children in the bloom of tender years; the prosperous, the afflicted, the sons and daughters of sorrow, the tempted, the

defeated, the drifting hulks of our human-kind—all who seek have found that something here which turns the soul to God. Is not this fact the ultimate reason of this amazing variety in the scriptures? This book was intended not only to teach vital themes, but to teach them in such a way that they would make appeal to men, and men, while alike in their fundamental needs, are very unlike in moral character, temperament, immediate environment and upbringing, views of life, modes of thought, length of years and range of experience. Wise teachers recognize this fact and vary the form of truth accordingly. Christ, supreme among teachers, adapted His teaching to His audiences. To fishermen He said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." To people familiar with sowing and harvesting, trading in pearls, fishing with drag-nets and raising sheep He spoke in terms of everyday life; but, while always vivid, He could and did unfold deeper measures of truth to His disciples in the upper room after their three years of contact with Him and promised, moreover, that the Spirit of Truth would later lead them further still. In line with this principle the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of milk for babes and solid food for full-grown men. Not that truth is not to be made as plain as can be. That is an obligation which rests equally upon teachers everywhere, inspired and uninspired alike. But some truths require exposition where others ask only simple statement: compare the exposition of the doctrine of justification by faith, to which two epistles of the New Testament are given, with the statement of the virgin birth of Christ. And there are varied ways of approaching and presenting the same truth. Christ taught the value of the soul in plain statement: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall all a man give in exchange for his soul?" He taught it likewise in the form of parable, "The Pearl of Great Price." And illustrations could be multiplied.

Thus it is that while every portion of the Bible possesses real value to quite every earnest reader of it, the mental stages and the spiritual needs of men so widely differ that these portions do not appeal to all alike. Indeed, the mental and spiritual needs in any one life are such that a passage of scripture that

today is mere statement of abstract truth may tomorrow be all aquiver with personal meaning. Or, to state it differently, special needs are met in special sections of the scripture. The Book of Genesis, for example, is a general favorite among readers of the Old Testament; but while every devout student of it would regard it first and always as a book of religion, the Christian geologist would find special interest in the accounts of Creation and the Flood, the Christian ethnologist in the table of the nations in Chapter 10, the Hebrew in the transactions with the Father of the Faithful, and the public speaker in the moving plea of Judah on behalf of Benjamin in Chapter 44. The book of Job has much of profit for any reader, but it can be read with fullest appreciation only by those who will do strong thinking. The book of Ecclesiastes, with its messages for all, has a special message for pessimistic philosophers of any generation. The Gospel of Matthew, invaluable to every Christian, will probably be the Gospels of Gospels to Jews when they turn as a people to their promised Lord. The Gospel of Mark, without ever losing its hold on those of older years, grips the young man and the soldier on the march as does no other. The Gospel of Luke, precious to all readers, will ever make special appeal to those who love the beauty of pictures and the rhythm of poetry and the perfection of literary form. The Gospel of John, while possessing sections that delight the heart of the youngest—and the repentant worst—is yet on the whole especially suited to maturity of Christian experience, ranking perhaps supreme among the books of the New Testament that register and challenge our stage of spirituality. The Epistle to the Romans, of immense value to every reader, is counted invaluable by the logician and the theologian. The Pastoral Epistles are not wanting in precious counsel to all church members, but they are indispensable to the minister. And so throughout.

This feature is not an isolated fact. It links up with human life. It holds values for us in the prosecution of our ministry or the use by all of us of opportunities for service in Christ's name. We should read and study the whole of this written revelation, but we should not be discouraged if we find our-

selves or others having strong preference for this or that portion of it. The genealogical tables have their place, and not an unimportant one, in this history of a chosen people, but where we read these tables once we should probably want to read the Parable of the Prodigal Son a hundred times. This is but natural. And it is but natural to find that what today seems to have no special lesson for us may tomorrow be the message of all messages to our need,—an added reason for reading every part of the Bible earnestly and thus laying up the word in our hearts in preparation for the emergency that will need it as it needs no other truth. Wider still, this book holds something for all, something *vital* for all, at every stage of life and in whatsoever situation. Do men differ each from each? God has met the infinite variety in human life by an infinite variety in His Word. Does a man differ from himself with the ongoing days? This book will answer the demands of changing circumstance, and so truly that there can come in human life no deep need that its pages are not suited to supply, no high endeavor that its pages are not fitted to inspire, no glowing hope the flame of which its pages will not feed. The Word of God, suited by its endless variety to reach and minister to men, this is the word we may hold to our heart of hearts and carry with us as in faith and love we go in the name of Him who gave it and promises to bless it in the rescue and the restoration of human lives.

IV. A fourth feature of the Bible is *its forward look and beckoning*.

The structure of the Bible is not accidental, but providential; not mechanical, but organic; and this, under whatever arrangement of the books in its two main divisions. There is a unity here that binds all parts of this wondrous book together. And there is always here the forward, onward vision. The book seems ever pressing to a goal. The goal of Old Testament history and legislation and prophecy is reached in Christ. The goal of New Testament prophecy, as indeed fully for the Old, is reached in Christ as only King of a redeemed and victorious humanity.

It has been already pointed out that the history of the Bible

is the history of redemption. We miss the very purpose of it if we regard it in any other way. The scarlet thread in the cordage is redemption by the blood. What a wonderful history of redemption it is! The handiwork of God is perfect, but sin soon enters the fair domain and places its image deepest upon the one part of it that was made in the image of God. But with the entrance of sin the promise of salvation enters: the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. In a world where sin should abound, grace should abound much more. Sin was mighty, but not almighty. Its victor would come, and from the wounded race. From this time forth alongside the stream of sin flows another stream,—“the developing purpose of grace.” Sin is to be always in view, but redemption no less clearly. Is it a desolating flood sent in punishment of sin? One godly family is saved to start the race anew. Are the cities of the plain destroyed because of grievous wickedness? A righteous man is saved by the faith of believing Abraham. Is Joseph cruelly sold into Egypt? The long purpose and result will be to bring Israel to school in the most brilliant surroundings of the time and train it in unexpected ways for its great mission to the world. Is Judah for her sins led into captivity and exile? It will teach the lesson that “there is no god but God”; it will spread abroad through exile lands the knowledge of the Holy One; it will thus awaken and enlighten earnest souls in the far darkness and help thus to prepare the world for the coming of its one true King.

Observe the sweep of this history of redemption. The history of the race as a whole yields to the history of one family through which the race is to be blessed. The head of this family, Abraham, was called out of heathenism for a purpose plainly declared: “In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Isaac becomes the channel of this blessing, not Ishmael. Jacob becomes the channel of this blessing, not Esau. Judah becomes the channel of this blessing, not Reuben. The family grows into a nation, disciplined, delivered, enlightened, trained through wilderness experience, settled in its own land and then successively oppressed and saved through the period of the Judges. The kingdom, set up

through the agency of Samuel, meets disaster in Saul, comes to glory with David and to outward prosperity and then decline with Solomon. Then follows the divided kingdom until Israel falls, and Judah more than one hundred years later on; then the exile; then the return of the faithful, chastened remnant that sets up the second commonwealth, to be held together until Messiah's rule should go out from His chosen land and people. A great silence in the sacred written history stretches between Malachi and Christ, a gap of four hundred years; but God's hand was leading in the events that cast up the highway for the King of the Ages. And "when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son." (Gal. 4:4).

But not alone the course of history. The institutions of the Jews, equally of record in these pages, led on to Christ. The priesthood shadowed forth his perfect and everlasting priesthood, himself both Priest and Sacrifice. The prophetic order reached its culmination in him who was both Messenger and Message. The kingdom, shattered by successive world-powers, found more than the realization of its hopes in "the prince of the kings of the earth." The redemption promised to the newly-fallen race—that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head"—has been and is now in process of fulfilment in the person and work of the historic and everliving Christ, the one and the almighty Redeemer of men.

"The everliving Christ." The New Testament, equally with the Old, looks to Him for the fulfilment of its cherished hopes. He promised His return upon the clouds of heaven and those who following wrote for Him were ever sounding this note to comfort the afflicted, to hearten the discouraged, to cheer on the workers in wide fields: "He is coming." And when the written revelation is nearing completion, it is still with the forward vision, the vision of the Holy City coming down from God out of heaven and the new heavens and the new earth thronged with a redeemed people who behold Him face to face, who are restored into His image, who serve Him evermore.

The Golden Age of the ancients was in the past. The Golden Age of the Christian is in the future. His religion is essentially



a religion of not alone the upward but as well the forward look, the onward vision, the beckoning and the hastening to "that one far-off, divine event to which the whole creation moves," the pressing on to the goal of higher things in this present life and to things infinitely beyond earthly description in the next. The Christian begins upon his Golden Age the moment his life is hid with Christ in God. He carries heaven with him in his heart while journeying to the Heavenly City. And he looks to his Saviour King for the consummation He has promised when hope shall be lost in fruition and faith shall yield to a vision that is face to face.

This is a religion of hope, and the only one in this burdened earth of ours that can both claim and make good this high distinction. Human philosophies end in the darkness of despair. The pagan religions of the world hold out either an impersonal future or one repulsive to the fundamental instincts of the soul. The semi-Christian, semi-pagan religions that parade glorious hopes cut away their every reasonable and satisfying ground by denying the one foundation on which such hopes can stand. The Christian religion in these pages holds out eternal hopes with the assurance to us that they will never be put to shame, an assurance based upon the continuing work of Christ as Priest and King, His resurrection and ascension the pledge to us that what He promises He will amply and gloriously fulfil. This is the religion of hope, for the individual and for the race, that we may bring to our fellowmen, and to the most hopeless of them, for it is "unto the uttermost": sins forgiven and the whole nature renewed; the image lost in Adam restored in Christ; the companionship lost in Eden recovered and everlastingly continued in the glory that awaits. This is the religion that should send us with sane optimism and radiant joy to the work awaiting us, whether of the years of training or the added years, if God grants them, to be spent in heralding the glad tidings of salvation. For

"I know of a land that is sunk in shame,  
Of hearts that faint and tire,  
But I know of a name, a name,  
That can set that land on fire."

Louisville, Ky.