

IX.—THE OLD SERMON.

"Preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."—Jonah III:2.

"The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings."—Isalah ix:1.

"It is a great thing to stand facing manward and preach to men the everlasting gospel."—Joseph Anderson.

"We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord."—II Corinthians iv:5.

"Reasons are the pillars of the fabric of a sermon."—Fuller.

"Sic a braw sermon wad soun' graun' in Gaelic."—Beckwith Elder.

THE REV. GEORGE BUCHANAN never used notes or manuscript in the pulpit. The widespread Scottish prejudice against "read sermons" he fully shared. His habit was to prepare each discourse carefully, generally writing it entire and occasionally summarizing the leading ideas, then to commit it to memory and deliver the message looking the congregation squarely in the face. He always sought to proclaim the everlasting gospel, "not with enticing words," but to glorify God, to edify believers, and to bring souls into the Kingdom. A sermon he preached a number of times in Scotland will show the style of exposition a century ago. It is from one of his papers that escaped destruction by fire many years since. Entries on a blank page at the end record various dates and places of its delivery, among others this.

"Homily delivered before the Presbytery at" (the paper has crumbled away) "June 13, 1797."

Romans vi:19—"By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

That man, when he came forth from the hand of his Creator, was pure and holy is a doctrine agreeable to Reason and confirmed by Revelation. To this all have given their assent, whether Pagans, Jews, Turks, Mahometans or Christians, except a few of the latter who assume to be wiser than God. That he was and is under a just and equitable law, to which he cheerfully assented, and endowed with power and capacity to observe it, is equally acknowledged. Created in the image of God, he was endowed with moral attributes, with knowledge sufficient to know his duty, with holiness to render his will conformable to the Divine Will, and righteousness to correspond to his essential justice. That he might the more resemble his Maker, God constituted him His vicegerent here, after He had established the earth with the fullness thereof and rendered it fit and commodious for human habitation. He gave him dominion over the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea and over everything that moved upon the earth. Man was made but a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory, honour and dignity. All nature smiled upon him, the whole presenting a scene of harmony and beauty. Trouble and fear he knew not. Moreover, God regarded him with so much goodness and condescension that He entered into a covenant with him, not

for himself only, but also in the name of all his posterity as their federal head and representative, and on so easy terms as one prohibition, one easy charge. Upon condition of his complete and perfect obedience to this command, he and his posterity, as a recompense and reward of his true allegiance, were to enjoy sweet fellowship and communion with God, wherein consists the real happiness of mankind. He was stationed in a garden of the Lord's own planting and put by the wisdom of Omnipotence as the centre of terrestrial felicity, there to enjoy intercourse with Heaven and favour with God until, in the order of Providence, he should be translated to the upper world without tasting of death or the knowledge of sin and sorrow. "And the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden and commanded him, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

The law which God gave to man for his obedience was a law of absolute purity and perfection, in which, as in a spotless mirror, he might behold the glorious attributes of Jehovah. A holy God would never stain His moral government by giving His creature any other than a holy, just and good law, worthy of Himself and suited to His rational offspring, whose bounden duty it was to adhere to the precept with full, complete and perfect obedience. This was absolutely necessary for man's happiness here and in the world to come. The least violation was to be attended with dreadful consequences, for "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Yet man, although originally created pure, was not infallibly so; but, as a moral agent, was left to the freedom of his own will. Through the temptation of Satan soon was the gold to become dim and the most fine gold changed. He violated the law, broke covenant with God, and became liable to the curse and penalty thereof, in consequence of which, as a guilty sinner, he was bound over to misery and death. This the Scriptures and experience in the strongest and most explicit terms represent to be the sad case of all the sons of Adam. "The soul that sinneth shall die." We know that whatsoever the Word saith it saith to them that are under the law, "that every mouth may be stopped and all the world be guilty before God. Therefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Before proceeding farther it may, perhaps, not be deemed improper to enquire into the reason why God demanded such strict obedience to the moral law, or Covenant of Works.

I.—The law itself was holy, just and good, such as all mankind from the beginning to the end of time, if we suppose them presented in a state of innocence at its first promulgation, could not but accept and agree to obey. From its very nature this obligation must be perpetual; wherefore the perfection of God and the unalterable nature of His law indispensably required perfect righteousness.

II.—The Holiness of God, which adds lustre and harmony to all His other perfections, removes Him an infinite distance from every kind and degree of moral evil; nor can He, by reason of the infinite rectitude and perfection of His nature, otherwise than conceive an everlasting displeasure at the least transgression of His holy law. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity but with the greatest detestation and abhorrence. How, then, shall His hatred of sin show itself? Surely not by admitting the sinner into His favour and heaping upon him the blessings and effects thereof; but, on the

contrary, by his condemnation and utter destruction, unless satisfaction be made adequate to the offence. Can it, therefore, be supposed that a God of spotless holiness and purity can but maintain an everlasting opposition to sin as contrary to His righteous nature and holy will? Shall we imagine that He should pardon that which He hates and admit the sinner into His favour without such satisfaction as may testify His highest indignation against sin? The Holiness of God, therefore, makes His righteousness absolutely necessary for the pardon and salvation of guilty man, or he must perish forever.

III.—The Justice of God required complete and perfect obedience to His holy law. God's justice is an essential attribute of His nature, which disposes and determines Him to "render to every man according to his works, whether they be good or evil." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" The Supreme Lord of all cannot but do that which is right. Behold in what awful glory doth He represent the honour of this attribute, after giving the highest display of grace and goodness, as recorded in Exodus xxxiv:6-7: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin," as the necessary character of His inflexible justice. He adds that He "will by no means clear the guilty," upon no account whatever discharge the transgressor without suitable satisfaction made to His Justice, the ground and foundation of that Righteousness by which He may acquit the sinner and receive him to His favour. His Holiness and ardent zeal to vindicate the honour of His law and the unalterable right of His justice absolutely required a perfect and unsinning obedience.

How, then, shall the sinner be accepted as righteous in the sight of God? He possesses no inherent righteousness of his own to plead as the ground of his justification. Whose righteousness, then, is sufficient for the arduous task of rescuing man, rebellious man, from eternal misery and death? Neither men nor the world can furnish us with it. Were we to travel the whole creation in search of it, we should return miserably disappointed. The angelic hosts that encircle the throne of God and issue forth as ministers to fulfil His will have no grace, no righteousness, to spare. Although they are holy, yet are they dependent and continue in their purity only by continued grace; nor have we any connection with them that should entitle us to any righteousness of theirs. Besides, immortal spirits such as they are could never atone for the transgression of mortal man, for sin must be expiated in the same nature that sinned. Therefore, the question still recurs: By whose obedience shall fallen man be reconciled to his offended Creator? Blessed be God, who hath not left us in darkness. The answer to this all-important question is expressed in the words of the text: "By the obedience of one (namely Jesus Christ) shall many be made righteous."

In the further presentation of this subject what I propose, in humble dependence upon divine grace, is:

I.—To consider the nature and extent of Christ's obedience to the Divine Law.

II.—To point out who they are that are here denominated "the many" that "shall be made righteous."

III.—To mention some of the blessings of which they are made partakers here, and to the everlasting enjoyment of which they are admitted hereafter.

IV.—Lastly to conclude with some practical improvement of the whole, as time may permit.

I.—Christ presented to the law a holy nature as well as a holy life. Though descended from Adam according to the flesh, it was by an extraordin-

ary generation and derived from him no sin, no pollution whatever. Before His conception in the womb the angel of the Lord announced to His virgin mother the holiness of His nature and said unto her: "The Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that Holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." But—

1. His life was perfectly holy and a perfect pattern of every grace that could adorn humanity. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." "For such an high priest became Him who is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." However depressed His person was with a load of humble accidents and shadowed with the darkness of poverty and reproach, so that the Jews, not excepting even His apostles, could not at first discover the brightest essence of His divinity, yet such was the holiness of His life that it shone conspicuously in the greatest darkness and found confessors and admirers among his very enemies. Thus the wife of Pilate called Him "that just person." Pilate himself pronounced Him guiltless at the same time that, from a wicked heart and the desire of a lawless multitude, he was about to pass the sentence of His crucifixion. Judas the traitor declared Him innocent, and the very Devil, whose works he came to destroy, styled Him "the Holy One of God." His love toward mankind made Him leave the mansions of glory, where in the bosom of the Father He was exalted from all eternity at an infinite distance from all sin, and where the happiness or misery of men could neither augment nor diminish His essential glory and felicity. But such was His condescension that, in the fullness of time, He came into our world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He veiled His divinity, tabernacled upon earth, and preferred fallen man to rebellious angels. Love was the principle of all His actions, the life and soul of His conversation. In all He did or spoke He made some new discovery of His love to the world. The history of His whole life abounds with the expressions of a most sweet and loving temper. He went about doing good and distributing the choicest blessings. His career was one continued act of charity and beneficence. Although from before the foundation of the world He was holy, wise and happy in and through Himself, and had no need of our imperfect service, yet in obedience to His Father's will He came to fulfill all righteousness, voluntarily offering Himself to pay the penalty of the law. As it is written: "Himself took our infirmities and bore our distresses. For we have not an High Priest which can not be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin."

2. One would imagine that, when Jesus left the mansions of glory to procure the pardon and salvation of sinners, everything would conspire to render the prosecution of so benevolent a design successful. So far from this, however, almost everything conspired to render Him "a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs." Kings of the earth sate themselves and rulers took counsel against the Lord and His anointed. He was persecuted from place to place, as though the vilest of criminals. If we take a survey of the whole course of His life, we will find it to be one constant scene of suffering from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary. He at whose nativity the angels sang praises to God and proclaimed "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men," received no accommodations but a stable, no cradle but a manger. "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head." "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." The Jews expected a Savior, but mistook

his character. They imagined he would make his appearance as an earthly prince, with splendor and magnificence, to deliver them from the Roman yoke, which they bore with the greatest impatience. But Jesus appeared in a low and humble manner, not to attract the attention of the great, but to reclaim the vicious. For He says: "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." As mankind had sinned both in soul and body, it was necessary as our surety that He should suffer in both. Consider this, ye who live in sin and in the neglect of your known duty. Behold and see the evil nature and demerit of sin. Oh, may it be the object of your deepest aversion, and holliness the aim of all your pursuits. Meditate upon the sufferings of the Lord of the redeemed and be no more allured by the vanities of life. See the Son of God, with invincible patience and love, endure all the indignities and torments His enemies could inflict. Pilate, when he passed the sentence of crucifixion, to add to his other cruelties caused Him to be scourged. The soldiers stripped off His raiment and put a purple robe, the mock insignia of royalty, upon the King of saints. They plaited a crown of thorns and put it upon His head who bestows a crown of glory upon His faithful followers. A reed, a mock sceptre, they put in His hand who sways the sceptre of the universe. They bowed the knee before him in mockery, saying "Hail! King of the Jews." Nay, more, He was betrayed by one of the little band over which he presided, derided by another and deserted by all.

If we follow Him to the Garden of Gethsemane, we behold Him under a load of sorrows and sufferings which none can comprehend, His sweat as great drops of blood falling down to the ground without any visible external cause. His agony made Him exclaim: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." If we trace Him a little further, we see Him ascending the steep hill of Calvary, weary and fatigued under the accursed tree to which His sacred body was to be nailed. Behold the cross upon which He was suspended between two thieves, as if He, too, were a malefactor. All the powers of hell engaged against Him, all the efforts of men were exercised to torment Him. What was still heavier to bear, the sins of all the elect world and the wrath of God due to sinners, which men and angels could not bear, were laid upon Him. Under the hidings of His Father's face He cried out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Behold now and "see if there be any sorrow like to His sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted Him in the day of His fierce anger." Then was it He drank the cup of His Father's wrath to the dregs and shed the blood which was for the healing of the nations. His Godhead supported His manhood until He could say "It is finished." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends. But God commended His love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

No wonder that the sun in the firmament at noonday should hide his face from beholding the sufferings of the Sun of Righteousness, the life and light of the world; that the veil of the temple should rend from the top to the bottom, the rocks split, the graves open, the dead rise and all nature put on the sable garb of mourning and weeping. Had they no further significance than to vindicate His divinity? Did not the rending of the veil prefigure the breaking down of the middle wall of the partition between Jews and Gentiles, and the opening up of a new and living way of access to the Father through the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh? Did not the earthquake, which shook the earth and burst the rocks, presage the sounding of

the last trumpet? Did not the rising from the dead portray a general resurrection and a future state of rewards and punishments? Did not the darkness which covered the earth indicate our lost state by nature and the need we have of the Sun of Righteousness whose love was stronger than death? Oh, remember His boundless love and let your love and affections burn towards Him with an ardent flame which sin and Satan cannot quench. Even in the last scene of His sufferings He prays most fervently for those who were recking their hands in His precious blood: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Yea, one of the thieves that had reviled Him, struck with admiration at His invincible patience and love, recognized Him as the God of Love and, through the strength of his faith, prayed: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest to Thy kingdom." For his comfort and consolation Jesus replied: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He would ascend to the regions of immortal bliss as a trophy of the Saviour's victory over hell, sin and death, a token of Christ's mighty power and proof that none can come to the Father except through the Son.

II.—I should now proceed to point out, as I proposed, who are "the many" who are made righteous by the obedience of Christ; but this, with the remaining heads that may follow, I must postpone until God may be pleased to give me some other opportunity. So I shall conclude at present with a few reflections from what has been said.

First permit me to ask you the important question which Jesus put to His disciples: "What think ye of Christ?" Are ye sinners by nature and by daily practice? Do you hate sin with a perfect hatred; is it such a grievous burden as makes you desire to be freed from it? If so, He is such a Saviour as suits your condition. Are ye sensible that the divine love hath many charges against you, and that ye stand in need of a better righteousness than your own to recommend you to the favour and friendship of God? Christ hath fulfilled the law and brought in an everlasting righteousness. Are ye liable to ignorance and error? He is the way, the truth and the life. Are ye conscious of your own inability to procure your salvation? He is able and willing to save to the very uttermost all them that come to God by Him, for He ever liveth to make intercession for them. Did Adam represent and his fall extend to all his posterity? The Righteousness of Christ extends to all the elect world which He represents. The sinner who by faith is interested in the Righteousness of Christ is henceforth esteemed righteous, not by his own, but by the imputed Righteousness of Christ, which faith receives and God accepts.

Appearing before the tribunal of the great God and pleading this Righteousness, thereupon he stands acquitted in law and is pronounced righteous. Thus the sinner is brought in as it were in a judicial trial, "holding up his hand," as a judicious writer observes, "and the Judge bespeaking to him: 'Sinner, thou standest here indicted for breaking the holy, just and good law of thy Maker, and hereof thou art proved guilty. Sinner, what sayest thou for thyself?' To this the sinner, on his bended knee, confesseth guilty, but withal humbly craves to plead for himself full satisfaction made by his Surety. 'Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died? And, whereas, it is further objected by the Judge: 'Ay, but, sinner, the law requires an exact and perfect righteousness in thy personal fulfilling of the law. Sinner, where is thy righteousness?' The believing sinner humbly replieth: 'My Righteousness is upon the bench. In the Lord have I righteousness. Christ is my Surety and He hath fulfilled the law in my behalf. To that I

appeal and by that I will be tried.' This done, the plea is accepted as good in law, the sinner is pronounced righteous and goeth away glorying and rejoicing. Righteous, Righteous." In the Son shall the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory. May the Lord bless His word and to His name be praise, world without end, amen.

This homily, extended after its first presentation before the Presbytery to include the full treatment of the subject proposed at the outset, formed the basis of a sermon delivered at the following times and places:

"Perth, July 1st, 1797. * * Cupar-Angus, July 5th —97. * * Dundee, ditto 15 —97. * * Collinsburg, August —97. * * Edinburg, Sept —97, in Mr. Thomson's church * * Campbeltown, at the Communion * * Aberdeen, Oct. last Sabbath, 1798. * * Banff, April 21st, 1799. * * Bellshill, June 16th, 1799. * * Haddington, June 26, 1799, Reid's fast day. * * Straithkness, January 25th, 1801. * * Fast day, Links, Sept 4th, 1817."

The close writing, on unruled linen-paper of note size, now yellow with age and frayed at the edges, is quite legible. No erasures mar the eleven pages of manuscript. His utterances indicate the preacher's sturdy Calvinism and belief in Election and Imputed Righteousness. He never "shunned to declare the whole counsel of God," as he understood it. There is nothing to show that he ever delivered this sermon in Canada. Last year the Rev. Mr. Woodside, Presbyterian minister at Carleton Place, to whom the manuscript had been loaned, read the discourse to a congregation that packed St. Andrew's church. It is entirely probable that the forefathers of some in the audience heard it in Scotland a hundred years previously. After a century it is again brought to light and printed for the first time, with a heartfelt wish that it may benefit the reader, as the last tribute of affection and respect to the memory of my venerated grandfather, Beckwith's "Pioneer Pastor."

EVER ONWARD.

I must go on, though obstacles arise
On ev'ry side, if I would gain the prize;
Not to move forward is to fall behind,
To linger with the halt, the lame, the blind,
Nor with the foremost reach the shining goal
Where rich rewards await the earnest soul—

I must go on!

I must go on! The path may be unseen,
Not always found in fields of living green,
Where flowers bloom and brooks forever flow;
Briars and thorns may make my progress slow,
No grateful shade subdue the burning heat,
Yet must I toil to have my task complete—

I must go on!

I must go on! Danger lurks in delay,
To pause is loss. I come no more this way
To right a wrong, to set all things in place
My footsteps in life's journey ne'er retrace;
Each hour has its own duty to direct,
To-morrow's zeal squares not to-day's neglect—

I must go on!

—John J. McLaurin.