

THIS SERMON IS A REGULAR WEEKLY FEATURE

PEOPLE'S



Sermon by CHARLES T. RUSSELL, Pastor Brooklyn Tabernacle.

Utica, N. Y., Aug. 21.—Pastor Russell of Brooklyn Tabernacle preached here twice today to large audiences. We report one of his discourses from the above text. He said in part:—

One of the wonderful things about the Bible and the Christianity founded upon the Bible's teachings is the fact that it contains so much sympathy—comfort for the bereaved, the sorrowing, the troubled. This is not true of any other book or any other religion in the world. And who is there that does not at some time in life need sympathy, need encouragement, need a powerful and loving friend such as our Bible assures us our God is to all who will accept his favor?

But our great Adversary, Satan, seeks to make the light appear dark and the darkness appear light. He seeks to negate the testimonies of God's Word, and, to a very great degree, his deceptions have been successful, as is witnessed by the creeds of Christendom. Practically all of our creeds, even though they assert that God is gracious, merciful, kind and loving, contradict this description of him and his Plan for humanity in monstrous terms, fendish in the extreme. The majority of creeds tell us of his foreordination and pre-arrangement of whatsoever comes to pass and that this signifies that a saintly handful will gain eternal life in joy in heaven, and that the unsaintly thousands of millions of heathendom and Christendom are equally foreordained to spend an eternity of torture foreknown, foreintended and provided for before their creation. Is there comfort in this? Is such a plan God-like or Satanic? Could any intelligent and good being rejoice in such a plan of damnation or sincerely worship an Almighty God who would so misuse his unlimited power to distress his creatures, "born in sin, shapen in iniquity; in sin did their mothers conceive them?"

The minority of Christian creeds declare the same results, but that they were not designed of God, not foreknown by him, not predestinated. They tell us in other words that we have an incompetent God, well-meaning, but deficient in wisdom and in power. Is there any comfort in this? Would it assuage the grief and pain of those suffering in eternal torment if they could be assured that their lot was such, not because of Divine premeditation and design, but because of Divine incompetence? Surely there is no comfort to be had from such a view!

After all, we Protestants did not make much of an improvement upon the theory held by our forefathers against which we protested in the sixteenth century. Surely purgatorial tortures of a few centuries are no worse, no less comforting than our Protestant conceptions of an eternity of torture for all the non-elect. Our Catholic forefathers manufactured Purgatory without a shred of Scripture upon which to base the theory. They built it in their imaginations; they invented its fires and tortures. Our Protestant forefathers, using their imaginations, gave us an eternal torment hell—not more tangible, not more Scriptural than Purgatory. They did indeed use a Scriptural term—sheol, hades, hell—but, overlooking the fact that these words all signify the state of death, the condition of the dead, they wrested the language and warped it in an unscriptural manner to signify torture. The penalty or "wage of sin is death." They made of it torture everlasting, without the slightest authority of Scripture except a misunderstanding and misapprehended parable, which, rightly understood, teaches a totally different lesson. The false Gospel has surely lost its power. People are becoming too intelligent to endure it. As a consequence attendance at Churches is decreasing and reverence for God is diminishing. Infidelity, called Higher Criticism, etc., is increasing.

The need of the hour is the Gospel of comfort. St. Paul declares what we all know, namely, that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." Here we see the necessity for this Gospel of comfort. We see also that God has provided it and that it is coming to the world in the end of this Age, in the dawning of the new Age. It will come to the world in general as soon as the elect Church shall have been selected and, by the "First Resurrection" power, glorified with her Lord as his Kingdom class, as the glorified sons of God, whose mission it will be to bless all the families of the earth.

"Father of Mercies—God of All Comfort." When St. Paul says, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord," he evidently refers to the fact that our Creator has declared that "the wage of sin is death" (not eternal torment); that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (not live in torment); that "all the wicked will God destroy" (not preserve in fire); and that only such as come into vital relationship with the Redeemer can have everlasting life. Knowing these things respecting the Divine govern-

ment laws and regulations of Messias' Kingdom will begin to rise up, step by step, out of their fallen, degraded condition of sin, and be brought back to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed at Calvary. In proportion as they will retrace their steps and come back into Divine fellowship their shame will decrease and their contempt also. Finally in the consummation of that age all who will may have attained full restoration and regeneration and freedom from shame and contempt. The unwilling and disobedient and rebellious will be destroyed in the Second Death—"twice dead, plucked up by the roots"—without hope of any further resurrection or restitution.

"Comfort With These Words." St. Paul urges that Christians should not be ignorant concerning those who are asleep—that they "sorrow not even as others who have no hope." It is bad enough to think of millions of the heathen as being totally extinct, hopelessly dead, without any prospect of a resurrection. The same would be true respecting our neighbors and friends, parents and children, brothers and sisters, who are not saintly, who are not in "Christ Jesus," who are not walking after the Spirit, who are not heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord. And if it would be a sore trial to think of them as utterly destroyed in death and without hope of resurrection, resurrection, how much worse would it have been when, in our misunderstanding of God's plans, we thought of them as being in either Purgatory or eternal torture. Such a false conception of the Divine plans is even worse than to believe them without hope and extinct.

The Apostle proceeds to point out the basis of this hope in these words, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring (from the dead) with (by) him" (I Thessalonians iv. 14). So, then, the Apostle declares, the resurrection hope is the Christian hope, and the basis of the hope of this resurrection is that Jesus died that he might be man's ransom—that he arose from the dead that he might be the great Deliverer of mankind, the Prophet, Priest and King of God, and that he might gather to himself the elect Church, the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, as his joint-heir.

Christians, of course, in thinking of the resurrection of the dead, would primarily, chiefly, consider their dear ones of the household of faith; hence the Apostle continues his argument, saying, that those of the Church living at the time of the Second Advent will not precede or hinder those members of the Church who have died during the past centuries, for the dead in Christ shall arise first—shall be awakened first from the sleep of death.

"Them That Sleep in Jesus." We cannot think that the Apostle refers merely to the Church in this case, for uniformly, in speaking of the resurrection of the dead, he refers both to the Church and to the world, the "resurrection of the just and of the unjust." So in this case he evidently refers both to the Church and to the world as "asleep in Jesus." The expression will be noted as different from another one of his respecting those who "sleep in Christ." The latter expression evidently refers to the Church as the glorified members of the Christ. But in speaking of those asleep in Jesus he evidently has reference to the whole world of mankind. The whole world died in Adam without having a voice in the matter of their birth or trial or condemnation. "Condemnation came upon all because of one man's disobedience." Likewise justification is to pass upon all of our race through the precious merit of Christ's sacrifice. The fact that he "died, the just for the unjust," constitutes his death a satisfaction price for the sins of the whole world.

From this standpoint, therefore, the whole world not only died in Adam, but now sleeps or waits unconsciously for a resurrection of the dead through the merit of our Redeemer's sacrifice. If we believe that Christ died for our sins and laid the foundation thus for his great work of blessing the world of mankind, including the Church, the first-fruits, let us believe also that God who began his good work will not stop until he shall have brought forth judgment unto victory—until all the redeemed world shall be brought to a knowledge of the Redeemer and of the Heavenly Father and to an opportunity for life everlasting through obedience. The world died in Adam—"In Adam all die." Jesus is the Redeemer of the world. "Even so all in Christ shall be made alive."

The message has reached the Church only, as yet. In due time it will reach every member of the race. The Church is already reckonedly quickened from the dead by the holy Spirit and will shortly be born from the dead in the "First Resurrection." The world, therefore, from the Divine standpoint is not dead in Adam now, but merely asleep in Jesus, waiting for the glorious time when, his Kingdom established, he shall call all mankind from the prison-house of death, from the tomb, that each may learn to the full of the grace of God in Christ, and have opportunity for attaining life everlasting.

These are the words in which we are to comfort one another—words of hope respecting the resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust—words of sympathy, words of assurance, words that show that God is better than all our fears; that yet in a little while he that shall come will establish his Kingdom—first the Church in glory and secondly Israel and all the families of the earth through them. Everything connected with the Divine message is full of hope, full of encouragement, full of blessing, to those in the condition to receive it.

ment we persuade men everywhere. "Be ye reconciled to God"—and thus attain the only eternal life which he promised. But, on the other hand, note the kindly description of our God which the Apostle furnishes. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all of our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any tribulation, by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our comfort also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation, \* \* \* or whether we be comforted, it is for your comfort and salvation, \* \* \* knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the comfort" (II Corinthians i. 3-7).

What a wonderful statement respecting the Divine intentions for the comfort of the world and the comfort of the Church, all proceeding from "the God of all comfort." Nothing written in any sacred books of any people at any time reveals such a God as the God of the Bible—a God infinite in Justice, Wisdom, Power and Love. It is he that is "working all things according to the counsel of his own good will," for the ultimate comfort and salvation of as many of his creatures as will accept his favors, after being brought to a knowledge of the Truth respecting them. The Church is now comforted during this Gospel Age (saved to the highest plane of the heavenly nature) and during the coming Age the world is to be comforted and saved to the human nature—as many as will. For the world this means the glorious opportunity of the mediatorial reign of Christ which will constitute their time of restitution, uplifting, resurrection to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (Acts iii. 19-21).

PULPIT...

Most Comforting Words, Words of Life

"Comfort one another with these words" (I Thessalonians iv. 18).

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"Comfort—With These Words." In order to appreciate the meaning of our text we must consider the words of the Apostle preceding it, beginning with the 13th verse. He declares, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope." All Christian people agree that the word sleep here refers to those who died. They are not asleep in heaven, of course, for there all is wakefulness and intelligence and joy. They are not asleep in Purgatory, of course, for, according to our Catholic friends, sleep there would be an impossibility. They are not asleep in an orthodox hell, for, according to the description given by Protestants, none could sleep there. Where, then, are those who are "asleep"? St. Paul says that we should not be ignorant concerning them. Have we not been ignorant in the past—foolishly ignorant? We have ignored the Apostle's words entirely. We have refused to believe that any are asleep and claim that all are awake, alive—a few in heaven, the many in Purgatory or eternal torture.

But St. Paul was right! The entire Bible teaches that all who die fall asleep. Thus we learn of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, that he "fell asleep" (stoned to death). We read of the good and bad, kings and peasants, falling asleep in death. We read that King David slept with his fathers—some of them good, some of them bad. We read that Abraham slept with his fathers—some of them heathen. The Bible tells us where they sleep and that they will all be awakened from the sleep of death in due time—in the resurrection, during Messias' reign of a thousand years. The Prophet declares that "Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to life everlasting and some to shame and lasting contempt" (Daniel xii. 2).

Those who will be awakened from the sleep of death unto resurrection of life will be the blessed and holy, the saintly, who will be associated with Messias in the Kingdom work for the blessing and uplifting of the non-elect. Those who will be awakened from the sleep of death to shame and age-lasting contempt will be the non-elect world. Their shame will be in proportion as they have enjoyed light, knowledge and opportunity and have failed rightly to appreciate and use these. They will have contempt from their fellows, in proportion as their shortcomings of the present time will be shown up. Many highly esteemed amongst men will be awakened to that shame and age-lasting contempt. But their case will not be a hopeless one. Much of their weakness and dereliction were the result of Adam's transgression and the sinful conditions which have resulted, including unfavorable environment. God has provided in Christ redemption for all from the sins and weaknesses resulting from Adam's disobedience and thus the entire race of Adam is guaranteed an individual trial under favorable conditions—for life everlasting or death everlasting.

All who will render obedience to the

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