

Sunday Afternoon

Tennyson and St. Paul on the Goal of the Creation

By the Rev. Amory H. Bradford, D.D.

Till we all come . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.—Eph. iv., 13.

A child can ask questions which a philosopher cannot answer. The humblest often have thoughts which take hold of the profoundest problems. Great thinkers have no patent on great ideas. Philosophy is only an extended study along lines of thinking which tradesmen and artisans are pursuing quite as eagerly as professors and preachers. Mothers are the first philosophers, for to them first comes the consciousness of the solemn mystery of life. Socrates and Kant only elaborated in the sphere of thought ideas which long before came to millions of mothers through their affections. Among the questions which will never cease, and which keep thrusting themselves on our consideration, is one which we will make the theme of our study—What is the goal of the Creation? To what are all things tending? Plato held that back of visible objects are abstract ideas, and that things which come to pass are only the expression or manifestation of something which had pre-existence in abstract thought. If we could see God's thought concerning the Creation what should we behold? Who has not asked, Will things always remain as they are, or is the Creation itself a continuous process not yet complete? The doctrine of evolution points toward a far-off golden age; and we cannot help asking, What will be the condition of things when evolution is finished and man has reached his final state? Thoughtful men can never be content with things as they are, but ever ask concerning what is to be. This tendency characterizes all literature. The great poets have had visions of a future in which the processes now at work will be completed. Philosophers have dreamed of ideal states which were only their conception of what the race will sometime attain. The Bible is as full of this thought as is any other literature. The prophecies of Isaiah thrill with ideals of a time in which swords shall be beaten into plowshares, spears into pruning-hooks, and in which there shall be none to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain. The Epistles of Paul throb with prophecies of coming glory. In Romans, Ephesians, and Corinthians they appear again and again; while the sublimest chapter in the New Testament—the seventeenth of John—gives to them the sanctity of the Saviour's prayer.

In his vision of "the crowning race" Alfred Tennyson closes "In Memoriam" with a strain of the same music:

Of those that eye to eye shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is earth and earth's, and in their hand
Is nature like an open book.

This stanza contains Tennyson's answer to the question, What is the goal of the Creation? In it he gives his idea of what the crowning race will be. What is that idea?

(1) Eye to eye they shall "look on knowledge"—that is, then men will not have to go through processes of study to learn, as we do, but will be so alert and pure in thought that they will see into things, and know them as soon as they see them.

(2) "Under whose command is earth and earth's"—that is, there is coming a day when men will actually be master of the forces of nature; will be able to speak to the winds, the waters, the unseen forces, and be obeyed.

(3) "In their hand is nature like an open book"—that is, they shall read the strata of the rocks and the stars of the heavens as now we read poems, and the reading of the one will be no more difficult than that of the other.

(4) Then the brute inheritance will be dropped—"No longer half-akin to brute." Human passion, sensuality, desire for low and base things will be left behind as a butterfly leaves the chrysalis behind, and the man will be free—a pure spirit.

(5) God will be the law, the element, and the end toward which things will forever move. What a state that suggests! Man so near to God that he will be impelled by His wish—no other law. God will be "the element"—what earth, sky, atmosphere, are now; and into the fullness of this, now inconceivable reality, man will forever keep advancing, because to God there is no limit and no bound. Let us now turn to our Bible.

I. The Bible represents the Creation as in an imperfect condition—in a process toward something better. "The whole Creation groaneth and travaileth in pain"—not only those who have not seen Christ, but, Paul goes on to say, "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting . . . for the redemption of the body." The present condition is imperfect; the end is not yet realized.

Begin with individuals. Within each man two forces, one evil and one good, contend for mastery. No man is at peace with himself, and no one fully adjusted to his environment. The more we think and the farther we see, the more intense the battle becomes. The finest spirits have been made fine by tribulation. The fight is with tendencies to sensuality, envy, jealousy, and almost all that characterizes animals. It is a contest between the animal and the man. The human body is a cage in which are a wild beast and a pure spirit. Each life to-day is occupied with determining which shall go down—the animal or the man. The contest is not finished, although far more frequently than ever before the man is the victor.

In society the same condition exists. Individuals are arrayed against each other. Selfishness is rampant. Every man for himself, has been the principle since the world began. The weak are the slaves of the strong; the poor of the rich; the wise of the ignorant. In old days the great man was the physical prodigy; the fellow who could dare and do most became chief. The form of the fight has changed, but the same old battle is waged. Now it is capital against labor; blue blood against common blood; wealth against poverty; and all regulated by competition, which is supremely selfish. But things are not as they were. A better day is dawning. The strife is terrible—but not endless.

The same conditions exist among states. The nations are armed to the teeth; if there is no war it is because each is afraid to begin. The smaller powers are being pulverized beneath the wheels of the larger ones. The ingenuity of inventors is taxed to devise instruments of butchery. The industries are impoverished to support those who are trained in the art of war. The words of Paul are as true now as when first spoken—"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together." There is a tint of light on the horizon, but the gloom is dense and the struggle terrible.

II. But the Apostle was no pessimist. He never believed that the devil is stronger than God. If he ever spoke of the dark facts, it was to point to a time when the shadows will flee away. He said: "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Then he speaks of the time when the body, or the animal nature, shall be redeemed. This is exactly Tennyson's thought concerning "the crowning race"—a race no longer "half-akin to brute." What is the goal of the Creation? One element is the elimination of that which is brutal, bestial, in humanity. We are like thrushes condemned to live in cages. Our aspirations soar to the skies, but our better natures are broken against bars of sensuality and passion. This is an old battle. Think of Augustine, with his princely personality, the companion of the dissolute and vile until his best years were wasted. Think of Goethe, of genius almost divine, now singing like a seraph, and now dragging through the homes around him an influence vile as a serpent's slime. Think of Byron, with pinions like an eagle, with an eye which could look into the face of the sun, conquered by his lusts. Think of Poe, whose short life was a continual conflict with animalism. But why enumerate? The picture is too pitiful; it is not good to look at it too long lest we shall think that the sensual may as well win as be conquered. What says our Bible to all

this? It points to a time when will be realized the redemption of the body; when the lower nature will be mastered by the spiritual. Some time the brute inheritance will be eliminated. It is not strange that men fight and are vicious. Our ancestors were worse. The farther back you go, the more you find human beings like animals in tastes and habits. They lived in forests, and tore meat with their fingers. Now they live in houses, think high thoughts, fight against their evil inheritance, and look for ultimate victory. That vision of the crowning race is full of inspiration. But if a better day ever dawns, will it be this side of the grave? History will help us here. Historical scholars are never pessimists. Those who look from century to century always discover progress. Remember what conditions existed when our ancestors roamed the forests of Britain. Remember society as it was when robber barons held the common people in practical serfdom, and when pillage and bloodshed devastated all lands. Read the historical books of the Old Testament, and contrast those times with our own. Go back even one century, mark the changes which have been wrought, and then ask if a veritable millenium is altogether incredible. It is the tendency of heredity to perpetuate good inheritance for a thousand generations; it is equally the tendency of heredity to perpetuate tendencies to vice, crime and disease only a few generations. If history is prophetic, if the revelations of science are of value, the race may anticipate a day our eyes will never see, when the brute will never more master the man.

III. Tennyson speaks of the crowning race "under whose command is earth and earth's." That points to the dominion of man over the physical universe. The same thought is found in the first chapter of Genesis—"And God said: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and *over all the earth.*" That points to a time when humanity will reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. One power our Master had in perfection, and that was sovereignty over nature. He healed diseases, cured madness, put his commands on winds and waters. St. Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians teaches that sometime all men will have power over nature as Jesus Christ had. Because he could do what men never had done it does not follow that he did what they never will do. Scripture teaches that eventually the race will reach the measure of the fullness of Christ; then those living will be able to do what Christ did, and what we now call miracles will be the common achievement of the common people. This is the teaching of Scripture. There are already hints of the approach of such a time. By the discovery of anæsthetics, physicians have been given power over many diseases. They need to do hardly more than our Lord did when he made clay of spittle and put it on a man's eyes, before they can operate painlessly, giving sight to those who otherwise would remain blind. They have devised ways by which they can look into the ear, and by almost destroying it restore hearing. The experiments with electricity overwhelm us with the burden of their prophecies. Messages are now carried quick as lightning—*by the lightning*; and not only that, we make the same force propel our cars, light our houses, and are assured that soon it will carry our portraits a thousand miles and more. Every time we ride in an electric car we are propelled by a flash of lightning. The same force that zigzags the summer heavens, and sends the thunder reverberating among the mountains, is harnessed and made to take the place of horses on city railroads. And all these things men do as calmly and authoritatively as our Master commanded the waves to be still. Already there are exhibitions of power over nature which, if they had been done by our Lord, would have seemed as wonderful to onlookers as what they did see. We have solar engines by which papers are printed; the sun is made to paint our pictures, and even to flash our messages. By the phonograph books can be read into a tube, caught on tiny cylinders, and put away for the future to hear. This is not the same world in which the fathers lived. Think of a steamer

flying five hundred miles a day in the face of a cyclone, directed by a compass, impelled by steam, lighted by electricity, and carrying with ease a thousand and a half of passengers along a pathway of which the people in our Lord's time had never heard! We pass the light of the stars through a prism, and can tell what kind of fuel is burning in those far-away fires. And each day the marvel increases. Science speaks positively of a time, which no one can intelligently believe to be very far off, in which the race, in its power over nature and physical force, will reach the fullness of Christ. What may then be realized we may not even imagine; but it will be a great and glorious thing to enter into the liberty of the children of God; to be no more hampered by matter, space or force than Jesus Christ was.

IV. Thus have we been led to the thought that our Lord was the typical man. He was our Saviour; he was also our Brother. In him we see not only God in manifestation, but also man in perfection. Looking on the human side what are we taught? That Jesus was the type of the race. In him was revealed what the race was intended to be, and what it will be when Creation is complete. The Church has thought so much of the divine Christ that it has not grasped the full and glorious significance of the human Christ. He is the goal toward which humanity is tending. He is the crowning race. In him is seen the divine plan for each individual. What he was humanity is to be. In him what is seen? A Being with the animal in subservience to the spiritual; a Being who had all knowledge, and the wealth of the universe, whose supreme ideal was the service of humanity. A harlot went to draw water; the Son of Man sat by her side and told her of the living water. A poor woman crept up behind to touch his coat, and his sympathy healed her. He was in the wilderness where there were many people without food, and he fed them, although he would not work a miracle to feed himself. He was lied about, persecuted, followed from town to town, but he never spoke an unkind or an ungenerous word. He was the friend of publicans and sinners—their friend to uplift, not the companion of their sins. He never thought or planned for self. When he found that men were thinking too much of him he told them that it was time for him to go away. He never had an enemy, and never resented an insult. He never turned from people because they were poor or disagreeable. He laid himself down, and said, "Walk over me toward the Father's house and the Father's love." He died to save men who did not understand and would not appreciate. "He went about doing good." This Man, who could command the universe, and yet who used all his powers to benefit and uplift humanity, is the goal of the Creation. He is the One toward whom all things tend; in him is revealed the perfect race. No more inheritance of vice, disease, crime; no more the trail of the serpent staining the generations and leaving marks of sin and shame on the bodily organism. The brute inheritance eliminated; the physical universe with her myriads of forces now unknown waiting to do the bidding of man, and all living not to be ministered unto, but to minister—that is what the Master tells us is coming, not in some far-away heaven, but on this earth, among men who will look up into the same great and wide sky into which we look.

V. There is yet a loftier altitude. Our Master just before his death prayed for his disciples "that they may all be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be one in us." That hints at union of the human and the divine. Some day, instead of Cæsars, Charlemagnes, Napoleons ravaging the earth like wild beasts; instead of tyrants, simply because they are strong, binding chains on the weak which will make them miserable forever; instead of invention pushed to the utmost to discover means for destroying life; instead of trusts and monopolies, planned to make the rich richer and the poor poorer; instead of classes, pride, and a thousand things that separate and make hostile those who should be brethren, all men will be one, even as the Father and the Son are one. O wondrous ideal! O glorious consummation! O greatly to be envied people to whom shall be

given the joy of living in that crowning day! But for more than that our Saviour prayed—"that they may also be one in us:" humanity distinct and individual, yet all its members united in perfect love, so that their harmony can be imaged in no way so well as by the relation of Jesus to his Father. And then, in addition, "one with God"—not "absorbed or lost in God," as the Buddhists would say, but one in spirit with each other, one in spirit with the Infinite and Eternal. The Master's prayers were prophecies. That crowning race will sometime walk earth's hills and vales in the fellowship of perfect love, in the bond of perfect peace. In the flesh we may not see that golden age, but some day, looking from the heavenly heights, we shall behold no more a groaning, but a glorified Creation, and realize what Tennyson meant when he sang of

One far-off divine event
To which the whole Creation moves,"

and what the Apostle intended to teach by "the stature of the fullness of Christ."



Paul at Rome¹

By Lyman Abbott

The Rome into which Paul entered from the south, by the Appian Way, in the year of our Lord 58, was the Imperial City, the home of the Cæsars, the head and center of the power and splendor of the Roman Empire. As Italy was then the central country of the world, lying half-way between Palestine and Britain, the limits of east and west, so Rome was situated in the middle of Italy, a pivotal point from which diverged roads of magnificent construction, leading north, east, south, and west, to the furthest outposts of the Empire. The architectural wonders that attract the traveler of the present day were then unconceived. The Coliseum was not reared till later, in the reign of Titus. St. Peter's and the Vatican were undreamed of, and their site on the Vatican Mount was occupied by temples consecrated to Apollo and Mars. The streets of the city were, for the most part, winding and narrow, and flanked on either side by densely-crowded tenement-houses of an enormous height. Frequent accidents resulted from the loftiness of these buildings, constructed often in haste and carelessness, and both Augustus and Nero decreed that private buildings within the walls of Rome should not exceed the height of seventy feet. In these dark and smoky lodgings, for which they paid immoderate prices, the poorer classes dwelt, and the different floors and apartments were not infrequently shared among several families. From the capacity of these houses, allowing twenty-five persons to each house, the population of Rome at that time is estimated to have been about 1,200,000, one-half of which, in all probability, were slaves.

In glaring contrast to the squalor and indigence of these quarters were the public squares of the city—generous and ample spaces set apart for assemblies of the people, martial exercises, and games. The Campus Martius was the principal of these, dedicated to Mars, the god of war. It was surrounded by imposing structures, and adorned with statues and arches. The Forum also was a grand open space, eight hundred feet wide, that lay between the Capitoline and Palatine Hills, on which were erected respectively the Roman Capitol, or Citadel, and the imperial palace. The Forum was flanked on every side with porticos, rostra or platforms for public speakers, shops, and other buildings, all of imposing appearance, costly workmanship, and rich decoration. Overlooking the Forum, from which ascended a flight of one hundred steps, rose the massive and stately Citadel from the crest of the Capitoline Hill. It was the largest and grandest building of the city, square in form, with sides two hundred feet in length, and inclosing three structures—temples to Jupiter, Minerva, and Juno. Its gates were of brass, and it was adorned with costly gildings, whence it was termed "golden" and "glittering." The splendor of the public squares, as well as the poverty of the meaner quarters,

must have been well known to Paul. The Prætorium of which he speaks may have been either a barrack attached to the imperial palace on the Palatine Hill, or it may have been the great camps of the Prætorian guards, which lay to the northeast of the city, outside the walls.

Above the wretched class of slaves and paupers there were no graded ranks of a free, respectable, and industrial population. The chasm was deep and broad between the servile pauper and the comparatively small body of wealthy and arrogant patricians, whose luxury and profligacy were the apparent glory and the real curse of Rome. It was an epoch in the history of Rome of "gorgeous gluttonies and her most gilded rottenness."

In such a city, in such a state of social corruption, sharing in it to a large extent, dwelt a number of Jews. From the time when Pompey conquered Jerusalem, 63 B.C., and made Palestine a Roman province, the Jews, in gradually increasing numbers, had found their way to Rome, until now, in the time of Nero, they counted as a large factor in the population of the city, and enjoyed a certain degree of power, which, scorn it as he would, the Roman yet felt to be irresistible. The Jewish community, to the number of eight thousand, occupied a large district across the Tiber, in the neighborhood of the wharves and shipping, a location that suited remarkably the retail trade, which served for the most part as their chief employment. From their earliest appearance the Jews were to the Romans an object of scornful abhorrence, and they became the mark for the satire and malicious wit of the writers of the time. Martial describes how Jewish hawkers broke his morning slumbers with their bawling, and Juvenal complains of the way in which their gypsy-like women got themselves smuggled into the boudoirs of rich and silly ladies to interpret their dreams. Others of them, with a supple versatility which would have done credit to the Greeks themselves, thrust themselves into every house and every profession, flung themselves with perfect shamelessness into the heathen vices, and became the useful tools of wealthy rascality and the unscrupulous confidants of the "gilded youth." Some became the favorites of the palace, and made nominal proselytes of noble ladies, who, like Poppæa, had every gift except that of virtue. But, whatever their condition, they were equally detested by the mass of the population. If they were false to their religion they were flouted as renegades; if they were true to it, their Sabbaths and their circumcision and their hatred of pork, their form of oath, their lamp-lightings, and their solemn festivals were held up to angry ridicule as signs of the most abject superstition. If a Roman saw a knot of Jew beggars, he turned from them with a shudder of disgust; if he noticed the statue of a Jewish king, he frowned at it as a proof of the degradation of the age. Thus, in Rome, simply to be a Jew was to be detested. When to this was added the deeper taint of being a Christian—that is, to worship, in blind superstitious and incredible folly, "a crucified malefactor," the scorn and hatred were yet further deepened and intensified.

It is in the light of this picture that we are to read the short and simple story of Paul's preaching in the metropolis of the world, and his declaration in his Epistle to the Romans that he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. He who will contrast this solitary Apostle amidst such surroundings with the Church of Christ as it exists to-day, the dominant influence upon the continents of Europe and America, will find in that contrast the evidence of the soundness of Paul's faith that the Gospel of Christ was itself the power of God and salvation to all them that believe.

Christian Endeavor Topics, Daily Readings: September 11—Take heed to your example (1 Cor. viii., 9-13); September 12—By love serve one another (Gal. v., 13-18); September 13—Whatsoever things are true (Phil. iv., 8-13); September 14—Your conversation honest (1 Pet. ii., 12-17); September 15—Whose faith follow (Heb. xiii., 7-13); September 16—Let your light so shine (Matt. v., 13-16); September 17—Topic: Our example. What shall it be? (Rom. xiv., 21; Matt. v., 16). (Temperance meeting suggested).

¹International Sunday-School Lesson for September 10, 1893.—Acts xxviii., 20-31.