

* The Freeman *

IN fulfilment of a promise made to write an occasional short article on the modern religious press, we commence this month with *The Freeman*. When you order it of your bookseller, he considers within himself if you are an Irishman without the brogue, or only a red-hot Radical, and he asks if he shall have to send direct to Dublin for it. But you explain that the further title is, "Organ of the Baptist Denomination," and he suddenly remembers, smiling, that he is quite familiar with *The Freeman*, "and a very good paper too!"

"The Organ of the Baptist Denomination," you may have to tell your bookseller; but *The Freeman* needs not to tell its readers so. Every paragraph says so.

And here, at once, is the thing that is most admirable in this paper: it is steeped in denominationalism, and yet with marvellous success it steers clear of sectarianism. It is conducted by Baptists; it is intended for Baptists; it is nearly all about Baptists. The very reports of meetings it contains are furnished, not by professional reporters, but by Baptist ministers. And yet it never anywhere infers that except a man be immersed he cannot see the kingdom of God. Said the late Professor Elmslie once: "Since I came to London I have got to understand the Baptists a good deal better, and by way of atonement for my early misdeeds and misconceptions, I want to give my testimony about the Baptists." We too have had our misconceptions, and by way of atonement would give our feebler testimony. Not, however, to the London Baptists do we owe it, but to the pages of *The Freeman*.

We owe more than the removal of misconceptions. Among other things, we owe some of our love of living, healthy evangelical religion, and some of our faith in its great future. This is the grand

"Baptist principle," and we witness for *The Freeman* that it strives always to be true to it. Sometimes we have been surprised at the range of its sympathies, but we have never doubted the place of its affections.

And yet the soul of these affections belongs to that supposed soulless thing—a company. *The Freeman* is the property of a company, and its conduct is shaped by a body of directors appointed annually at a meeting of the shareholders.

The acting editor is the Rev. J. Hunt Cooke. To his editorial gifts he adds another, an expository gift of no mean order and of wide range. Whether engaged upon a series of studies in the Psalms, upon the weekly scientific illustrations, or upon some out-of-the-way corner of Bible work, like the "Humour of Scripture," he is always profitable. And from this gift, together with a wise instinct as to the needs and likings of the preacher, it comes to pass that *The Freeman* contains week by week an exceptionally large amount of Biblical exposition, from Dr. Maclaren's sermon downwards.

But Dr. Maclaren's sermon is the great feature in *The Freeman*. We hold that every religious weekly should contain a sermon. Though a weak sermon is about the worst copy an editor can send up, a powerful sermon is nearly the best. Dr. Maclaren's are powerful always. We once already deplored the loss to the world of the sermons that will stand the wear and tear of time next to Robertson of Brighton's and John Ker's. How many are laid away year after year with the numbers of *The Freeman* that, if rescued to permanency and publicity, would enrich our stores with the best and rarest expository materials, and give an immense impetus to the spread of the noblest evangelical doctrines,—let our readers witness by the short portion we here present.

The Grace that is Coming.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D.D.

"The grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."—1 PET. i. 13.

THERE is a very remarkable phrase in the original, which is only partially represented by either of the translations in the Authorized or Revised Versions. The apostle tells us that we are to "hope for the grace which is being brought to us in the revelation of Jesus Christ." There are three things we have to note here, and I touch them very briefly. The

loftiest hope of the furthest eternity is the hope of *grace*. We usually keep that word in contradistinction to *glory* as expressive of the gifts of God which we receive here upon earth in our pilgrimage. But the apostle here goes even deeper than that, and says, "Ah! it is all of a piece from the beginning to the end. The first gifts that a believing soul receives whilst it is struggling here with darkness and light, are of the same sort as the eternal gifts that it receives

when it stands before the throne, after millenniums of assimilation to the brightness and blessedness of Jesus Christ." They are all grace; the gifts of earth and heaven are one in their source and one in their nature. In their source one, because heaven, in its loftiest heights, and away into the very bosom of its very deepest and sacredest communion, is all the gift of unmerited and condescending love, which is grace. All the gifts are one in nature, and the loftiest and the last are but the efflorescence, the bright consummate flower and the undecaying fruit of the germinal gift that we receive on earth at the beginning of the Christian life.

It is much to think of that future as glory, the negation of all the darkness, the limitation, the weakness, the sorrow, the shame, the care, the sin of earth; but perhaps it is even more to think of it as grace, the superlative and transcendent perfection of what we have already received.

Further, says the apostle, this grace is "being brought to you." I suppose he, like his brethren, did not know when Jesus Christ was coming, and I suppose that this peculiar phrase may be the dress of his anticipation that He was coming very soon. But whether that be so or not, the expression is a very remarkable one. It corresponds with the other one in this chapter about salvation "ready to be revealed" lying behind a curtain, and only needing that the curtain should be withdrawn. So, says Peter, in this other and cognate metaphor, the grace that is coming to you has started on its road. It is being borne towards you as by a flight of angels down through the blue. And is that not so? Does not every tick of the clock bring it nearer? Does not each moment that passes thin away the veil; and will it not be dissipated altogether soon? The light that set out from the sun centuries ago has not reached some of the stars yet, but it is on the road. And the grace that is to be given to us, has started from the throne, and it will be here presently.

We are like men standing in the crowded streets of some royal city through which the king's procession has to pass. If we listened, we have heard the gun fire that told that he had left the palace; and He will sweep in front of us and sweep us up into His train before very long. The grace is "being brought to us."

And it is being brought not merely *at*, but "*in* the revelation of Jesus Christ." "When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall we also be manifested together with Him in glory." So inseparably is the poor, humble soul that trusts Jesus Christ united with Him through its trust, that Christ's apocalypse is its apocalypse, and that when He is glorified, it is sure to be. Like some mirror that may be lying in the first faint beams of the rising sun, but whose surface will grow more dazzling as the day advances, and when the noontide comes, and the bright orb pours down all its wealth of light and heat from the zenith, then the poor bit of glass will be transfigured into a light almost as flashing as the parent light. The Christ in me will be manifested when Christ is manifested on His throne, and that will be my glory.

If you can fancy a planet away out on the edge of our system; such as that one that welters in the fields of space, I know not how far from the central sun, and gets but a little portion of his light and warmth, and moves slowly in a torpid round; and imagine it laid hold of and borne right into the orbit of the planet next the sun, what a difference in its temperature, what a difference in the lustre and the light, what a difference in the swiftness of its motion there would be! We here are moving round a half-veiled Christ, and we get but little, and oh! we give less, of His light and glory. But the day comes when we shall be swept nearer the throne, and all the light that is manifested to us shall be incorporated within us. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope perfectly for the perfect grace that is being brought in the revelation of Jesus Christ."

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