

From the New Orleans Advocate. SERMON Preached by the Rev. Daniel Gregory, colored, at Frost Chapel, Fort Bend County, Texas, on Sunday, December 15, 1867.

The portion of Scripture which I have selected for my text this evening may be found in the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. John and the seventeenth verse.

"For the law was given to Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

I am afraid that from hurry and pressure of time that I can not speak of and treat these important words in the manner which they deserve. It is not many that at the first hearing of them, would appreciate their great meaning and value, and the importance of what they convey.

As you are, at least a majority of you are aware, it is my intention to preach the funeral sermon of two little children, Laura and Mary Ann Dyer; having to do this, but little time will be left me for the consideration of these eventful words.

Before, however, attending to that part of my discourse more closely connected with the funeral, I shall call your attention to the words which are clearly brought to your ears, and to make it as comprehensive as possible to you, I will refer to the Old Testament, where we find according to the promise of God, that to him was committed the care and guidance of the Israelites; God empowered him to act as it were, in the capacity of viceregent, and who was to govern with all the powers of a king, subject only to one higher than him, God himself.

In this way it came to pass that the people were governed by the law of Moses, commonly called the Mosaic law. This law, of course, it must be understood, emanated from God himself, Moses being merely the instrument through which the law was promulgated.

It was for this purpose that Moses was conceived and born, for this God took him under his own special care and guardianship, and when he had accomplished his mission, God said: "Enough," and took him to his own bosom. His only mission was not to be a lawgiver to the people, but on him was conferred the high honor of leading a bound and captivated people to a land of freedom.

Now it may be necessary to explain to you what is meant by the Mosaic law, "For the law came by Moses," the law that means the divine law. Moses was but human; this law was not of his own making altogether, it was accomplished by divine inspiration. God breathed, as it were, into the heart of Moses the laws that were to govern the children of Israel; Moses merely published and enforced them.

After the death of Moses the law was for a time observed, but as time rolled on the world again began to wax wicked, and finally renounced the divine law, excepting a comparatively small number that still worshipped the true God. The people were again falling into that condition of wickedness which at a former time caused the destruction of the world by the flood.

God the Father saw that instead of getting good and becoming more like his image they were going to ruin and destruction, till he was even through His infinite love angry with them, angry enough to destroy the world a second time, not by flood, that he had promised not to do. But a mediator, a true friend, Jesus Christ our Lord, says: "Father spare them and let me die in their stead." Spare them father, and now comes a proof of God's immeasurable love. "God so loved the world that he gave his only son." Was not this love? Where is the father on earth that will show such love? God suffered his only son to suffer and die instead of the people, and now comes the explanation of "but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Before the advent of Christ people were saved only by obedience to the law of Moses. Those that implicitly obeyed the directions of their common lawgiver obeying among other things the "ten commandments," were doing all that God required of them, but this was an artificial religion, there was no "grace," none of that divine essence that peculiar attribute of God's love called grace. Those that lived prior to the advent of Christ never could know the real depth of the love of God, and consequently could never love him as he ought to be loved. Salvation in the days of Moses was a mere matter of law; it meant obedience to certain injunctions; now, it concerns not the head and understanding, but the heart and soul. Grace and truth are now ingredients of our salvation. Faith first of all, then follow grace and truth. Have faith in Jesus Christ and in the power of God to save and there will come grace and truth. Let me entreat you to have this faith, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved, in God who only is able to set us free and give us an inheritance of everlasting life, we condemn us forever to woe and misery. The prophets foretold that he, Jesus Christ, would come upon earth and die to save sinners, and he came. He never made a promise which he did not fulfill.

When he had accomplished His mission of love He left us, ascending to the right of the Father Almighty. Before He left the world He said to his disciples: "If I go not away the comforter will not come. If I go I will send you a comforter that will be with you unto the end of the world."

That comforter is with us to-day, with God's people. Jesus Christ has ascended up to His father's house again, but He has left us the comforter. Oh! what a blessed thought, what a balm to the tried soul of the believer, what happiness ought to be ours as we think of this one more proof of God's love and fatherly care.

Those little infants that have passed away, nipped by an untimely frost, those little lambs that were not spared to encounter the tribulations of this world, where are they? They have been taken through the wisdom and the mercy of God to a brighter and happier climate; just as Jesus Christ was transfigured till his face shone as the sun and then soared away to heaven, just so have these little ones gone to that haven of rest, where through grace and truth you can one day meet them. They can not come where you are, but through God's mercy you can go where they are. How often have you said on your knees when praying to God, "Thy will be done," and how weep not, but bless Him for having done His will. Be faithful unto death and you shall have a crown of everlasting life. God knows what is best. He knows that if perhaps He had allowed them to live and grow up they might have been caught in the snares of the devil, and then you would have shed tears of real sorrow. Weep no more, mourn no more, your little ones are clad in white, wearing their stary crowns, and are able to praise God forever with the angels of light. Let us be faithful, let us be careful to serve God in truth, so that we may secure our entrance to His holy kingdom. I trust we may all meet on the "banks of sweet deliverance" on resurrection morning, and when the dividing line shall be drawn separating the sheep on the left, may we all meet on the right, and we shall then be permitted to gaze upon the jasper walls of the New Jerusalem and sing the song of Moses forever. Let us die at the feet of Jesus, and blessed be God, faith will enable us to outlive the billows and storms of this life, and pass that dark gate of death. And that we may all be called to the arms of the dear Redeemer is my sincere prayer.

graduating classes, until able to school almost by intuition. He had discovered that the effect of Butler's Analogy on some minds was to make the student more atheistic than when the study was commenced, and had supplemented the book with a series of lectures of his own, which generally had the desired effect of gaining the object Butler had in view. But I was not convinced. I told the doctor that the argument did not appear conclusive to me—that there was nothing in the whole argument that proved the existence of an intelligence akin to man's intelligence—that I could not perceive anything in nature which a combination of blind forces, co-existent with matter, could not effect—that light, heat, moisture, and nutriment caused plants to live and grow—that there was no intelligence in these forces—that plants were propagated according to well-known botanical laws: if the seed should fall in unfavorable places they would not germinate, and it seemed to be purely accidental whether a seed was deposited on favorable or unfavorable ground—if we had early warm weather in spring, the buds would swell and the trees blossom only to be destroyed by the frost—that an intelligence akin to man's would not permit such things; our intelligence would teach us that a frost would kill the fruit—that animals seemed to be governed by instinct, which many times appeared very unaccountable, but the thought or invention of an intelligent creator—in fact, that all nature seemed to be the result of blind forces acting according to the laws of matter. Two substances brought together would produce electricity; two substances having chemical affinity would unite when brought together; light, heat, electricity, gravitation, and the powers of nature seemed to make the world what it is—in other words, not an intelligence but blind forces made the world and what was in it. The doctor heard me through patiently, and said he would think over my case and talk with me again.

On passing his study a few days subsequently he called me in. He said he had considered my state of mind, and thought he could assist me in coming to a conclusion—that there was some plausibility in the argument I had used in regard to blind forces making the universe—that he could conceive how forces might aggregate matter, and form stone, for instance, and so perhaps of many other material substances; but, said he, turning abruptly to me, do you believe that you have a mind, a thinking principle, or whatever else you may call it, within you? I answered in the affirmative.

Well, can you give me a combination of blind forces could form or produce a mind, an active intelligence? I hesitated a moment and replied no. He left me to my reflections a few minutes, and I comprehended the full force of his question. He then proceeded. Does it not seem to you that it requires an intelligence at least equal to man's to form that man? If there be such a thing as mind in man, does it not seem to be necessary that a combination of forces equal at least to it, should form it? He went on—mind indicates a centre of consciousness. A centre of consciousness is neither more nor less than a being. I listened in amazement. My convictions were settled.

Fred. Mine are settled, too, uncle. I thank you, and feel more grateful than I can express.—Methodist Home Journal.

How it was. Fred. Uncle John, are you perfectly settled in your religious belief? This question was asked by my nephew, a conscientious young man, about to complete his college course.

Uncle John, I believe that for many years past, Fred, I have felt perfectly settled. Why do you ask? Fred. Do you never have a sort of lingering doubt in regard to some of the things taught by our orthodox ministers? Some vague longing for proof a little more positive on some points?

Uncle John. No. I am as certain of the truth of my belief as I am of my own existence; but why do you ask? Fred. You know that the course of study during the senior year is calculated to make a man think and reflect. We have had lessons every Saturday in the catechism—Vincent—which commences with the question: "What is the chief end of man?" This makes one think of the Bible and its doctrines. We have had also Butler's Analogy, which is calculated to tax one's reasoning and perceptive faculties, and leads one to look from nature to nature's God, as they say. Now, uncle, you know that I am a little inclined to be skeptical on all matters, or, to be a little more correct, with myself, I am not credulous. I want to know the "whys and wherefores" of every thing, and what with this peculiarity, and perhaps my dullness of apprehension, I have become, I'm afraid, very much at sea in my religious faith. My Sunday school lessons seem to have lost their influence on my mind; in short, uncle, I want to be plain with you, I am an atheist, which, of course, includes the infidel. With all their arguments I can not believe that there is a personal deity called God. To my mind Butler does not prove the existence of a thinking intelligence. I have tried hard to believe. I have sometimes thought that I was "lacking" in some very important mental faculty, because I could not believe as the most of those whom I so greatly respect profess to believe, you, uncle, the most valued of all my friends among them. Being so exercised in mind, I have come to you for advice. What can I do? You know what my reading has been. I have tried to read both skeptical and religious authors impartially, expecting, of course, I would settle down on the old orthodox platform as my father had done before me; but, as I said, I am at sea with nothing to swim upon—not a plank.

Uncle John. Your case, Fred, is mine over again. I have been exactly where you are. I know how you feel, and since you have shown such confidence in me by frankly revealing the state of your mind, I'll be equally so with you, and will make a short chapter from my own experience.

In my college course we had the studies that you have referred to. Dr. Hopkins heard the recitations, and gave us permission to state our views fully upon all questions which arose in the class. He submitted, with his peculiar grace, to the most severe questioning, and answered all questions as frankly as he was able. His mind had been sharpened by the constant drilling of more than twenty years' practice in discussing all sorts of religious questions with the

latimer addressed to his fellow-sufferer, Bishop Ridley, when both were about to perish in the flames at Oxford? Addressing Bishop Ridley, he said: "Be of good cheer, brother Ridley; this day we light a candle in England which shall never be extinguished." We question whether, if the archives of martyrdom were to be ransacked, there could be found a record of any more memorable utterance than this.

Zwingli, the great Swiss reformer, was killed in battle in the year 1531. His last words are cool and brave. Gazing calmly at the blood trickling from his death-wounds, he said: "What matters this misfortune? They may indeed kill the body, but they can not kill the soul."

As the last illustration of our subject we give the final utterances of the venerable Bede. Bede died at Yarrow monastery, near Newcastle, in the year 735. The account left us of his death is very striking. For a long time previous Bede had been engaged upon a translation of St. John's gospel into the Saxon language. His work, which was to give God's word to the common people in their own tongue, was very nearly completed; but Bede's strength was ebbing fast. He sat in his chair, however, conscious still, though the shades of death were fast gathering around him. The scribe, who was writing to Bede's dictation, now hastily exclaimed to him: "Dear master, there is yet one sentence not written." This recalled Bede's fast failing senses; and gathering together all his strength, he now into the Saxon language. His work, which was to give God's word to the common people in their own tongue, was very nearly completed; but Bede's strength was ebbing fast. 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