

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

Psalm cxxxiii,1

Jeremiah xvii,1-14

Revelation xii

Psalm 147

New Book of Worship, Psalm 147, p.89

Externally the world is becoming more and more a single community. There are, of course, national allegiances, yet the thought that the peoples of this earth can live and prosper independently of each other is seen to be an idle dream. Common dangers confront all nations. There is the danger of exploitation and the exhausting of natural resources, and there is the danger of the misuse of science and technology. All men need a permanent and stable peace. An increasing number of people everywhere are becoming aware of the fact that fear cannot be banished nor their aspirations satisfied unless all work together. The Scriptures throughout teach that men were created to live together and to work together in mutual love and service.

In this International Geophysical Year the scientists of sixty-four nations united in scientific exploration. One of the results of this collective undertaking was the launching of space satellites. Every achievement of science should be welcomed with rejoicing and congratulations. Instead the result has been anxiety, apprehension, and fear. This is because of selfish and worldly ambitions, which cause scientific advancement within one nation to be regarded as a threat to others and every new achievement to be fraught with danger rather than with blessings. For this reason scientific knowledge has acquired a decisive importance in national affairs, and it is felt that we as a nation must excel in this knowledge if we are to survive, and that in this knowledge will be found the answer to all our problems. We are reminded of the Scripture: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord."

There are two ways of living. The one is to live for this world and for what we can get out of it, and the other is to live for heaven and what we can do for others.

We are born natural. The youth looks forward to the day when he will be a man and own his own house and car and be established in some business or profession. He plans to make his future in this world successful by the development of his mind and powers. But this life is short; every life in this world is hurrying swiftly to its close, which no wisdom nor power can avert. We need a higher standard and a higher goal. The reason for discord and disunity is self-love, self-intelligence, self-assertion, and self-aggrandizement.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" It is good and pleasant to have natural peace among men, good and pleasant not to have discord and contention. But external unity can be maintained

only where there is spiritual unity. The Lord is the center and source of all unity. As we look to Him, to His will, to His cause, as all hearts are centered in the same Divine Being, the same wisdom, the same law of love, the same law of life and use, and hence the same purpose, all in Him and from Him, we become as brethren in unity. The reason for this is that self-love, self-intelligence, and self-aggrandizement then cease.

To dwell together, in the spiritual sense, means to be in the principle or spirit of goodness. That is what makes the life of the heavens. People differ, and that is what enables them to be of service to one another. The life of heaven consists in ministries to others - to men on earth, to spirits newly arrived in the other world, to other societies in heaven, or to one another within one's own society - for its continued development, prosperity, and happiness. In heaven all have a common cause, a common good; and they act together, each in his own sphere, each in his own way and place, working and dwelling in heavenly unity.

The Lord's purpose in the creation of men was and is that they may become angels. That is His desire for us. And that is our hope and our true destiny. But we cannot come into heavenly life if we know nothing about it and about how it is attained. If we do not believe in the Lord or in heaven, if we know nothing about heaven and its life, we lack the means of attaining it. Heaven is not attained by arbitrary allotment; it is simply a question of what we love and what we are.

To put it another way, the purpose of this life is to be born anew, to be born of God and become children of God. And to be born anew involves the love of use to our fellow men, for that is the very spirit of the Lord Himself, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister.

We have our earthly uses, our social, civil, and political obligations. But above all these uses and as the very soul of them all is our duty to the Lord. It is not sufficient to do our natural duties well. In the present age the performance of our natural duties is mixed up with self-interest, self-approbation, and self-seeking. Spiritual uses, however, are done from love to the Lord and the neighbor. There is a relationship between the spiritual and the natural worlds. The natural world cannot live by itself any more than our bodies can live apart from our souls. Every phase of life is dependent upon its relation to the Divine. Our physical sight is from powers in the soul and ultimately from the Lord. To the Lord we must look for physical health and happiness. If man seeks to know only himself through nature, ignoring the knowledge of God, which the Gospel calls eternal life, all human development is purely naturalistic and does not carry over beyond the death of the body. Until we know the end or motive that lies back of creation, we can know nothing of the cause and reason for our exis-

tence, which is to bring the soul into harmony with the Divine love and wisdom. To love good as good from the Lord, to know truth as truth from the Lord is to become formed into the image and likeness of the Divine, and is conjunction with the Lord.

Heaven cannot be other than the logical outgrowth of man's regenerate life, while hell is the inexorable development of his unregenerate aims and selfish ambitions. Right living not only robs death of its terrors but it determines the character of life in this world. All philosophies and institutions which do not look to the development and happiness of all men must eventually prove themselves failures.

The peculiar merit of our times is that now the laws of heavenly life can be known. It is this knowledge, not knowledge of natural science, that is of decisive importance in human affairs.

For this purpose we come to worship in the sanctuary, to learn the truths of the Word, and to learn to live them in our daily lives, to strive to make them a part of the lives of our children and of the life of the communities in which we live. So will we be in the work of the world a means of helping to lift its burdens and to alleviate its miseries. The Word, when understood aright, not only teaches us as individuals whence we came and whither we are going, but by its laws guides or judges nations and governments.

The safety of the world is not in natural science or in physical power, but depends upon the association of men with the angels in the service and love of God, that the earth may become God's footstool as the heavens are His throne. The safeguard of the future is to know our own nature and needs, to look to the Lord, and to keep His commandments. This alone can bring about the fulfillment of the Divine prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done as in heaven, so upon the earth."

Amen