

Section Fifty-two.

Tuesday, August 23d, 1853.

This evening, in my library, among other things it was written:

Now we will try and give you our views of the true mission of Christ on the earth. And in reminding you of what was before said of our reasons, we again say to you that we are giving our opinions—opinions formed from the circumstances existing in the spheres where we dwell, the facts which come under our observation, and the ideas gleaned from those spirits in advance of us, who occasionally have intercourse with us.

Turn your mind back to the moral condition of the world at the time Christ was said to be born. You find the whole Jewish nation agitated upon the present fulfillment of certain prophecies made by men called prophets, who taught that at or about this time there would be born into the world a man who would restore the glory of the Jewish kingdom, and establish a dynasty which would exist forever. They ascribed to this personage attributes at once both earthly and divine—a being who would subdue all the nations who had oppressed their race, and found again their kingdom on a basis which would be supported by God. Mingled with this belief was the idea that this man would partake of a nature so pure that he would change the whole moral aspect of the times, and would emphatically be called the Son of God. Their wise men had predicted his coming, and had iterated his birth at a certain time, and had in a manner (mysterious it is true) calculated the precise period of its advent hundreds of years before his coming.

I doubt not that this person, foreshadowed by the proph-

ets, had, from the accepted belief of the whole Jewish people that he was indeed to come at a certain period, come to be also recognized as the future king of the Jews, by the nations surrounding them, and with whom they had commercial or other intercourse.

Thus the impression was kept up by this outside belief of the truth of the prediction of the Jewish prophets; and when the time had arrived prophesied by their wise men as the period of his birth, the Gentiles, as they were called, likewise looked for some glorious appearance of a being, part man and part God, who would restore the glory of the Jewish monarchy to far more than its original power and grandeur.

We often reason from hearsay evidence, and bring our minds to admit as fact what is derived from the notions and belief of others. Thus, I doubt not, the idea of this twofold nature of Christ was admitted by all nations to whom the peculiar religion of the Jews was known. At that time the communication between different nations was limited, and the ideas of government, religion, and the habits and customs of this people were but partially understood. It requires frequent and constant intercourse of man with man properly to understand his peculiarities and all his characteristics. Does not this hold true in reference to national communication?

But the Jewish priesthood were a jealous race, tenacious of their power, and exercising an unlimited control over the minds of the people. They, from the first, apprehended that their authority would be circumscribed, and that their influence also would be contracted. They could not submit to a limitation of a power which had been for ages universal, and it became a matter of serious import to them that the very nature of Christ's mission should be misunderstood. Thus when we are told that Christ was to be born, we are also told that he was to elevate the people, he was to institute laws which would restore the might and power of the nation, and he was to rule as king, possessing powers

derived from and almost equal to God. It was the policy of the priests to inculcate the material mission of Christ, the establishment of a material kingdom, and the institution of laws which should affect the material condition of the nation alone.

They perverted the prophecies; and instead of avowing his mission to be that of the reformation of his race morally, they made Christ a mere ruler, whose power and might was to be directed to the upbuilding of their nation, and the regathering of its people. It is not strange, therefore, that when Christ was born in the lowly manger, that he was not recognized by priest or noble, that he was insulted, reviled, and at last crucified. It is not strange, either, that his true mission was by the masses misunderstood, and that when he stood in the highways and byways, discoursing on the true nature of man, his duties to himself, to others, and to the world, he could not be comprehended by those who expected him in pomp, in glory, and with all the power and magnificence of a sovereign. It was not singular that when he taught the common people in the groves by the side of Jordan, or on the mountains overlooking Jerusalem, that when he traced life from the little child to the developed man on your earth, and pointed out all that belonged to him as a man, and then from life to death, indicating in words and terms which the world has not yet understood, though two thousand years have passed since their utterance, that from life to death man progressed, and from death through eternity it was still progression alone that was to develop his nature, that he was then as now misunderstood. To ascertain what was the true mission of Christ, we should attentively consider the character of the man as given in sacred history, and also in profane, and view his daily life and action in reference to the great work he was called to perform. The earliest indication of any positive ministration was his teachings in the temple when yet a child, and when he confounded the Priest and the Pharisee. At this time he reasoned of life, death, and eternity, and the ground-

work of all his teachings was, that the moral purity of man's life on earth was the guarantee of his happiness after death. From this period until the time of his death he sought out every opportunity to utter those sentiments; and were we to take the sermon on the Mount as the solitary evidence in support of our argument, we should triumphantly claim that Christ's mission was the reformation of the moral condition of the world; that he taught all that we teach; that love, purity, truth on earth, are the incipient steps of progression; that eternity develops no sentiments more consonant with the nature of God than progression from these principles. The simple parable of the Pharisee and the Sinner is pertinent proof of the truth of what I teach. The Pharisee, satisfied with himself, desired no advance, but thanked God he was not like other men; but the Sinner, conscious of his short-comings, convicted of sin, and of righteousness, and of a judgment to come, besought God to be merciful, to open to his mind the truths it behoved him to know, and to assist him in his earnest endeavors to progress in all goodness from life through death, onward through the spheres. What other interpretation can be given of this simple story related by Christ? The Sinner lifting up his eyes afar off, cried, God, be merciful! Merciful for what? That he might understand how to live, that his death might usher him into the liberty of life everlasting.

But what was the effect of Christ's teaching on earth? He says, I came not to destroy, but to fulfill. Let us ask what this fulfilling means? Does it not mean the fulfillment of the great design for which man was created? Before his advent, the world's conscience was pinned on the sleeve of the priesthood; their faith was the faith of all, and what they chose to inculcate as religion or truth was implicitly recognized and accepted by the people. What did Christ teach? He taught men to examine their own hearts, that by the fruits of a man's life was his moral condition to be tested. He says, Can a good tree bring forth evil fruit? Can the association with evil develop good? No; he

charges his disciples to be humble, and merciful, and truthful, to regard others in all the relations of life as they would be regarded when similarly circumstanced. He presents the spirit as a part of God, and says it was from God in the beginning, and he requires that spirit to be pure even as God is pure, that it might dwell with the Father forever.

The apostle, recognizing this principle, avows that man must work out his own *salvation* with fear and trembling. What can be the meaning of these words, "Work out our own salvation?" Yes; and it is a work of no little moment; it is the struggle with that which is impure in our natures, the eradication of error, the progress in good.

Christ taught the doctrine of forgiveness, and when asked when man should pray, and for what he should pray, he refers him to God. He does not associate himself in any way with the adoration of the Father, but says, Our Father which art in heaven.

In every act of Christ, in every reference made to his power, or to the power of God, he distinctly refuses to be regarded as any other than a man and the son of man.

True, he says, I and the Father are one, but he conclusively refers to the accomplishment of the object for which he came on earth; that in spirit they assimilated, he in the holy and intense desire to elevate his race, and God in the boundless benevolence by which he had permitted man this opportunity for progression.

Even when arrested in the garden he says, I could pray to my Father, and he would send legions of angels to my aid; emphatically here he admits no power belonging to himself—he refers every thing to God.

It would be useless to cite more evidence on this part of the question. What, then, is the conclusion? Christ, foretold by the prophets, was born of woman, a man designed for the elevation of his race in the promulgation of the truths which the darkness, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness of the world had obscured from man's understanding. Teaching him that, sprung from God, he was placed on earth to

develop here the properties which were to assist him in his progress through eternity; to open to man the high destiny of his soul; to reform the moral abuses of the world; to inculcate those divine principles that progress here, entails progress hereafter; to reveal to the blunted understanding of his race that the virtuous, the good, the pure, the benevolent, the charitable, and the merciful were of God, and of course laid claim to the kingdom of heaven. He taught the faith we teach, and in every particular Christ was a spiritualist, for he inculcated the stern lesson, that unless the spirit was pure, no act would be accepted for good. He said that the spirit defiled was like a whited sepulcher, fair without, but within filled with dead men's bones.

The application of this statement I leave for others. Christ opened the portals of the dark grave, and exposed the life beyond as one of progress. He brought man near to God, and bid him understand his connection with the Father. His conditions were, Repent, and in this he sums up all of spiritual doctrines. Repentance is progress, and progress the eternal happiness of the spirit.

You have thus my opinion on the mission of Christ. It should be recollected that the dark mysteries which shrouded the very God from the just idea which should have been disseminated of his attributes to the people, were in exact accordance with the same principles through all time, which have exerted so baleful an influence on man's progress since and before the advent of our Saviour. Let us understand the true nature of his mission, let us divest ourselves of all blind adherence to sect, and seek out from nature the true design of our creation. Christ found a world buried in ignorance. No true idea had been given of their destiny; and not until he dispelled the darkness which shrouded his whole moral nature did man make the effort to understand his true relationship to himself, the world, or to God. Looking back to Christ, we see the light which has been poured through the vista of years till it has now illuminated the whole civilized world, flickering as a spark, and scarcely

affording a ray to guide the benighted footsteps of man. Now we feel its genial influence; now we walk in the glorious beams which lighten up life and death, and send its rays even into eternity. Shall we close our eyes to the truths it develops? No; coincident with the birth of Christ was the sun of righteousness vouchsafed to all. It shines for all, and its mild light will dispel all error, all doubt, till the time when the soul shall enter on one glorious day, which shall sparkle in the beams reflected from the Godhead forever and ever. On, then! The morn is breaking, and the glad sounds of joy are already wafted to our ears. Earth recognizes the refrain, nature responds in her own harmony, and the spirit feels how much there is of eternity in its own aspirations, even while progressing from earth toward heaven.

BACON.

Section Fifty-three.

Sunday, August 28th, 1853.

This evening, at Dr. Dexter's, it was written:

THERE is one circumstance in connection with Christ's mission on earth which distinctly shows what the object of his birth and sufferings was, and what the design of his labor among men was too, and that is, his intimate association with the masses whom he taught. To me, in the consideration of this whole subject, there is a most beautiful thought in this mingling of his own elevated nature with the grossness and ignorance and perverseness of the common people. Teaching them by trite and simple par-

ables, he descended to their comprehension, and came to the very door of the hearts which were not closed against him.

He ministered to the very principles of their nature, as he has done to the millions of our race who have come after him, in appealing to those very sentiments which have moved the human heart in all ages. Accustomed from his birth to all the deprivations and inconveniences which poverty generated, he associated with the masses on common ground, and thus, being one of them, he partially removed the dark veil which shrouded the future from their natural view. Disregarding all the claims of the rich and powerful, he essayed to develop in the people a love of themselves, a better appreciation of their own nature, and an anxious desire to assist one another. He cast his bread among the waters, and after the lapse of two thousand years he has found it in the tenfold increase of those aspirations which now so signally mark this age and time. How profoundly he understood the human heart! and in the picture which he drew of man's disposition he leaped over centuries of time, and identified the man of his own day and generation with man of the present age in all his attributes and properties.

But there is one feature of his mission which has not been apprehended, or even noticed, by all the divines of every sect who have pretended to explain his teachings since his death, and that is, he spoke, when on earth, to the very feelings and thoughts which could and would improve by the knowledge which he taught. He kindled a fire in the hearts of all men, slumbering though it has. While ages have passed and nations have been born, and have been buried, too, with the past; while laws have been established and temples have been built; while those laws have passed away, and those solid temples have crumbled into dust, still this fire has slumbered, but it has been the slumbering of the fires in the mighty volcano of time.

Now the heavens are darkened, dark volumes of smoke

issue from its vast crater, the lurid flame darts upward toward heaven, the clouds, the darkness, the storm, the whirlwind have passed away, the light illumines the whole earth, and in the efforts of man for the amelioration of his race, in his struggles for freedom of thought, of speech, of act, in the mighty achievements of his hands, in the recognition of his rights, and in the establishment of his liberty as a man, we have the effects of Christ's appeal to man two thousand years ago, distinct, marked, and visible at the present day. In the teachings of Christ we have the fundamental principles of every revolution which has succeeded in establishing the rights of man on earth. In this we have an illustration of the mission of the Saviour as a Reformer, and the effect of the progress of man.

And we have, too, the first point of earnest inquiry which his teachings elicited, What is man's destiny after death, and for what was he created? BACON.

I inquired if Christ was in his sphere?
It was answered:

Christ I never saw. The very faculties of his nature, which enabled him to progress so much while on earth, have so materially advanced his passage through the spheres that he has far outstripped the rest of his race. Christ, in the development of all the high, noble, and good characteristics of his nature, became perfect even as God is perfect, and he now dwells in those happy spheres where God is made manifest in all the mighty effects of his being. I doubt if he has descended to these spheres since his advent to this world. A nature so pure would seek its happiness where there was no grossness to pain it, and no material barriers to interrupt its progress. Thus, I believe Christ is with God, where I shall see him, and so shall you, when thousands and tens of thousands of years shall have passed away; when divested of sin, when pure as the morning star, your spirit shall wend its way through the eternal glories of the celestial spheres; when in the immortal splendor and

brilliance of your own purity you shall be able to stand in the presence of the spirits who are in themselves God; when not a thought shall animate you, not a feeling influence you, but such as shall distinguish you as a spirit given off from the First Cause, holy, immaculate, and regenerated forever.

Then shall you, and I, and all of us, see Christ, for then shall we be like him, then shall we possess the courage to seek him, and then shall he say, Ye are my brothers and ye are my sisters.