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BISHOP FOSTER'S NEW GOSPEL.

ON Sunday, September 23rd, Bishop Foster preached before the Pittsburg Annual Conference of the M.E. Church, over whose sessions he has presided. We give extracts from his discourse as reported by two of Pittsburg's daily papers, as follows: –

"If I could concede for a moment that the world as I know it, and I know it from rim to rim, having traveled in all its lands, having seen its dissolute, despicable millions, having seen it in shame and filth, and if I were compelled to think that my God, whom I worship, would by any possible method of condemnation send down to hades 1,200,000,000 of my brothers, that know not their right hand from their left, and save a few of us who are a little better perhaps in our morals, I would not go into heaven if I could. I could not worship such a God as that. I would join the hosts of hades in rebelling against such a God. Our God is not a God of that kind. God is love, and is trying to save men."

– *Pittsburg Dispatch.*

"If I believed that God would send down to a hopeless eternity 1,200,000,000 of my brothers who are little worse than I am, I would not worship him. I have seen the world all over, know it from rim to rim, have seen its desolate and despicable people, and these I speak of hardly know their right hand from their left. God won't condemn all these. He's saving all men that he can. If I thought he would condemn all these, I would join the forces of the devil in hell, in rebellion against such an act." – *Pittsburg Post.*

The accounts of the two reporters are sufficiently alike to insure us that no serious mistake has been made as to the tenor of the Bishop's expression. But surely it is a remarkable expression, coming as it does from the foremost bishop of the M. E. Church. The bishop is, as he

declares, well posted upon the condition of the vast heathen world – four-fifths of the living human family. He is well posted also respecting the missionary machinery for the civilization and conversion of these millions. He knows that while it was never before so complete as at present, yet, even now, the natural increase is proportionately far greater than the ratio of conversion. The bishop sees no hope for the heathen through the preaching of the gospel, and hence "flies the track," and leaves the Bible plan of salvation, – faith in Christ's redemptive work, a faith that comes by *hearing* of the word of God, the Gospel of salvation, a [R1710 : page 307] gospel which is the *power* of God unto salvation to *every one that believeth*. – Rom. 10:17; 1:16.

Why should this intelligent man, a leader of thought amongst a very intelligent class of Christians, thus leave the gospel of the Bible? a gospel which declares: "Without *faith* it is impossible to please God;" "He that *believeth* shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned;" "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" etc., etc. Why should he, as above, preach *another gospel* – the gospel of the merit of ignorance? The gospel of salvation without faith? – the gospel of salvation by works? – the gospel of a salvation without a Redeemer? *for*, if the heathen are to be saved because God could not do otherwise than save those who "know not [R1710 : page 308] their right hand from their left," or to keep the bishop from joining "the forces of the devil in hell in rebellion against such an act," then Christ's death was in vain: it certainly is no factor in the gospel which the bishop is preaching (of a general heathen salvation in ignorance of the *only* "name given under heaven or amongst men whereby we must be saved,") even though his text was, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son."

The reason is that the bishop's intelligence has outgrown his theology. He has spent more time and honest mental effort in viewing

the world from rim to rim and studying its social and moral questions than he has spent in studying his Bible from cover to cover with an honest desire to learn God's explanation, in it, of his purposes for the blessing, of the world of mankind *through faith in Christ!*

The bishop's *new* gospel will strike a responsive chord in many hearts – in the hearts of missionaries who know better than others how little they really accomplish; – in the hearts of worldly people, who will say, That is what I always believed; faith never saves anybody; it is works or nothing; – in the hearts of worldly Christians, who will say, that relieves me greatly; I believe that our great religious leaders are advancing far beyond the old-fogy *faith* ideas of the past, to see that it is not what we know or believe merely, but what we do, or God's free grace, that saves us. The modern agnostic and higher-critic will say, That is the way to talk; it is time people were being taught to cut loose from those *narrow* expressions of the Bible which so evidence the narrowness of the minds of the Lord and the apostles. Indeed, almost all classes will be prepared to welcome the bishop's *new* gospel.

How strange that all of these are so averse to the Scriptural explanations of these questions which trouble the bishop and all men who are even beginning to think! How strange that those who will applaud the bishop's *new* gospel will entirely overlook one feature of it, which, if true, would certainly stamp it as *bad tidings* to all the holy ones who through patient perseverance in well doing have cultivated faith, trust, hope and love, and developed character from grace to grace and from glory to glory! What would these, who, through the faith that overcometh the world and by much tribulation, enter the Kingdom of Heaven, think of it, if within the pearly gates, where they had anticipated so much of love and pleasure, they were to find the hundreds of millions and billions of ignorant, degraded, depraved and characterless of heathendom pouring in upon them and outnumbering them to such an extent that a saint would be a hundred times harder to find in heaven than now on earth! To say the least, they would be

astounded; and if an explanation were asked, and Bishop Foster were given the opportunity to reply, and had not changed his opinion, he doubtless would say that, after having done all he could for them on earth without success, and fearing that the bishop would join the forces of the devil and thus make a bad matter worse, God did not know what else to do with the heathen than take them to heaven.

Would that the good-hearted, but benighted, bishop would face about and see the Millennial dawn, the increasing light of the Sun of Righteousness now shining forth! He then would see what he does not see now, that God's plan as presented in the Bible is transcendently more reasonable, more benevolent, more just and more practicable than any which he or other human beings could possibly concoct or outline.

What would he see? Briefly this: That God's time for giving the heathen to Christ (Psa. 2:8) is in the Millennial age and not in this Gospel age; that when God undertakes the work of causing the knowledge of himself to fill the whole earth, it will be done; for his Word shall not return unto him void, it shall accomplish that which he pleases and prosper in the *thing whereto he sent it*. (Isa. 55:11.) He would see that this knowledge of God is to reach, not only the very ignorant heathen of foreign lands, but, as well, the very ignorant of civilized lands; for "*all* shall know God from the least to the greatest." He would learn that the Millennial age will not only be a time for gaining knowledge of God, but a time when the obedient will be blessed with *restitution* to all the privileges and qualities and powers of mind and body lost by disobedience by Adam for himself and all [R1710 : page 309] his posterity; – redeemed by the Second Adam's sacrifice for sin, once for all. He would thus see that the Millennial age will be the great purgatory time in which the world in general will be permitted, if they will, to wash at the fountain opened in the House of David for sin and uncleanness (Zech. 13:1); – by faith in the blood of Christ to be made every whit whole, and fit for the fellowship of angels and saints.

The bishop would learn, moreover, that nothing unclean or unholy can enter God's presence and be acceptable with him, and that, as the Church is now called to be saints and to practice holiness ("without which no man shall see the Lord"), so it must be with the heathen when, during the Millennium, they are called, taught and released from the blinding influences of Satan. Only the pure in heart shall ever see God or enjoy the bountiful provisions prepared for those who *love* him.

Then Bishop Foster would be prepared to learn something respecting God's purpose in the call of the Church, and what is the hope of her calling. (Eph. 1:18.) Soon he would see that as God selected one class of servants during previous ages, to be used in his great plan for the future blessing of the world, so during the Gospel age he has been selecting a household of sons to be joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, the Lord and Head and Redeemer, in the Millennial Kingdom and its work of binding Satan and opening the eyes of the world so long blinded by Satan. – Gen. 12:3; Heb. 11:40; Acts 15:14; Rev. 20:1-4.

Soon the Bishop would be not only studying this blessed gospel of the Bible, but circulating these truths amongst his friends, and in every way preaching the old gospel, the old theology – that "Christ Jesus by the grace of God tasted death for *every* man," that he "gave himself a *ransom for all*, to be testified in *due time*;" and that eventually the "true Light" will *lighten* "every man that cometh into the world." – Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; John 1:9.

We will comment on further quotations from this remarkable sermon in our next issue.
