

THE FIRST AND THE SECOND

NO. 2698

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 28, 1900.
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
 ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 9, 1881.

“He takes away the first, that He may establish the second.”
Hebrews 10:9.

THE way of God with men is to go from good to better, and from better to best. In the creation, “the evening and the morning were the first day,” “and the evening and the morning were the second day;” and so on to the sixth day. God often gives us darkness before He gives us light, and He gives us some measure of light in the rising sun before He gives us the full glory of noontide. And this, I suppose, is not because God needs any such rule for Himself. He can give the best first if He so chooses; but I imagine that this arrangement is needful because of our infirmity. It would never do for weak eyes to have the full light of the sun pouring down upon them. Often, when men are faint, and nearly dying of hunger, they would be killed outright if strong meat were at once set before them; they must be gently fed as they are able to bear it. So God, knowing the feebleness of His creatures, and especially the feebleness of His sinful creatures, is pleased to bestow His mercies with great wisdom and prudence. Little by little, first a very little, it may be, and then rather more, and then still more, and then much more, and then most of all, until He does exceedingly abound in mercy towards us according to the riches of His grace.

It often happens that the lesser blessing is a sort of preparatory school before the greater favor. The Law of Moses acted as an education for men to prepare them to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. The types and shadows of the twilight of the tabernacle and temple services helped men, by and by, to appreciate the substance when the True Light began to shine among the sons of men. We have need to be continually educated and trained for that which lies before us. Even heaven itself we are not fit to enter until we have learned something of the heavenly things here below. There is a first in order that there be a second; and the first has to be taken away, when it has fulfilled its design, in order that then we may enter upon the second. Some lower good precedes the higher; and when the lower good has educated us for the higher, then it is removed, and the greater blessing fills its place, even as it says in our text, “He takes away the first, that He may establish the second.” I am going to sever these two sentences from their connection, just for the time being, because they seem to me to contain a valuable general principle, which may be used for comfort and instruction in many ways.

I. I shall ask you to notice, first, THE GRAND INSTANCE of this rule given in the chapter from which our text is taken, the instance which was the occasion of the utterance of the rule. “He takes away the first;” that is, the sacrifices and offerings of the ceremonial law—“He takes away the first;” that is, the blood of bulls and of goats—“that He may establish the second,” which second is Christ Himself, the one effectual propitiation for sin, the great burnt-offering which the Lord accepts, and by which He is reconciled to all who trust in it.

The taking away of “the first” involved *the removal of instructive and consoling ordinances*. Let us never forget that “the first” was given for the wisest possible purposes, and was itself exceedingly useful. God forbid that we should ever find fault with the first dispensation, for it was the means of great comfort, and of much instruction, to the people of God who lived under it. Though it was, in itself, little better than a piece of glass, yet the Old Testament believers saw much through it. Those of them who had clear vision saw through it the same Christ whom we, by faith, see at this day; so that window was to them a very precious thing because of the future glory which they were able to see through it. I can

understand how David enjoyed the ceremonies of the holy place in his day; and how, when he was obliged to be absent, he longed once more to stand within the tabernacles of God, and envied the very sparrows and swallows that could fly or build their nests around the courts of the Lord's house. I can realize how earnestly he desired again to stand and see the priests presenting the holy offerings before the shrine of the Most High; and I can easily comprehend that to tell him that all these observances were to be put away, would give him some cause for disquietude. But when he understood that they were to be removed in order that a second, and a better dispensation, should be established in their place, then his disquietude would altogether cease.

Brethren, we ought this day to be far more happy than ever the Jews were when God had accepted their richest sacrifices; for what, after all, were holocausts of bullocks, what were thousands upon thousands of lambs compared with the only-begotten Son of God who has sacrificed Himself on our behalf? Of what avail were all the rivers of blood that were shed, and the seas of oil that were poured out? What comfort could they bring to Jewish believers compared with that which we derive from the flowing wounds of the Christ of Calvary, and from the fact that He who suffered on the cross, that He who was dead and buried, has risen again, and gone back into the glory, and is there pleading, on our behalf, the merit of His one finished, perfect sacrifice? Yes, beloved, let "the first" go; we need not drop a single tear over its departure, seeing that "the second," which is established in its place, is so infinitely superior to it.

Many Jewish believers tried, as long as ever they could, to keep some relic of the old dispensation. For many a year, they sought at least to teach that converts to Christianity must be circumcised; but they gradually learned that, with the coming of Christ—or, rather, through His death, the old dispensation was all taken away. Every fragment of it is gone; and, if we are wise, we shall say, "Let it go; why should we seek to preserve it? Why should we keep that which is dead now that the ever-living One has come, and dwells among us? So, let 'the first' go, and let 'the second' be established."

I want, dear friends, to urge all of you to come to this decision very emphatically. I beseech you never to try to bring back "the first." I do not suppose you will ever literally imitate the Jews, and offer the sacrifices enjoined under the ceremonial law; but there is, in certain quarters, an attempt to bring back portions of it—ill-formed, broken bones of that which has long since been dead. For instance, when men insist upon it that such an unscriptural ceremony as infant sprinkling is necessary to salvation, and that another man-made rite must be performed, or else grace will not come to us, if we yield to their pretensions for a single moment, we shall be putting ourselves under the bondage of a ceremonial law, which has not even the authority which the law given by Moses had. The two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, which Christ has left us, are blessed means of instruction and comfort to living men and living women, but they are not saving ordinances; and he who tries to make them so, in any measure whatever, is to that extent seeking to bring back "the first" dispensation, which God has forever abolished. He is also endeavoring to disestablish "the second" dispensation; as far as he can, he is overthrowing it. But Christ will not share with rites and ceremonies the glory of our salvation. We are either saved by grace through faith, or else by the works and ceremonies of the law; there can be no mingling of the two, for they are diametrically opposed to each other. There must be a clean taking away of "the first" that there may be an establishing of "the second."

Then I want you, next, to take care that you regard "the second" as being really established; that is to say, that there has been offered one great sacrifice for sin, and that Christ's sacrifice has put away sin, and has put it away once for all. This is *the establishment of the real, perfect, everlasting atonement*. Now, Christian people, you do believe this as a matter of doctrine; but have you truly appropriated all the blessedness of it? Do you know that your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake; that an atonement has been presented for you, by which you are so effectually purged from guilt that you will never need to bring any other purgation, or to look for any other atonement? Do you really regard yourself as one who will never have to offer another sacrifice for sin because your conscience is completely purged already, and you are clean every whit? I know that some professors do not like Kent's verse, but I like it, for I quite agree with him when he says—

*"Here's pardon full for sin that's past,
It matters not how black its cast;*

*And, O my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come, here's pardon, too!"*

The Christ who died on Calvary's cross, will not have to die again for my new sins, or to offer a fresh atonement for any transgressions that I may yet commit. No; but, once for all, gathering up the whole mass of His people's sins into one colossal burden, He took it upon His shoulders, and flung the whole of it into the sepulcher wherein once He slept, and there it is buried, never to be raised again to bear witness against the redeemed anymore forever. Do regard Christ's sacrifice, then, as firmly established, and, having been once offered, never to be repeated, that one offering having completed the redemption of all the blood-bought throng, and so finishing the great work that nothing needs to be added to it.

II. Now, secondly, I want to give you SOME HISTORICAL INSTANCES in which the same rule has been carried out. I must speak very briefly upon each point, so try to catch the words as they fly.

First, *God took away the earthly paradise, but He has given us Christ and Heaven.* God gave to man, originally, perfect happiness. In the Garden of Eden there were all manner of delights. And under the Covenant made with our first father, all of these would have been ours if he had persevered in obedience. But Adam sinned and so the Covenant of Works was broken. He fell, and we fell in him and, therefore, paradise was taken away from him and from us. There is no hope of our ever going through the gate of that garden. Even if it had remained perfect and we could find it, we would see there the cherubim with a flaming sword turning every way to keep us out of the garden. Why have you taken away this paradise, Lord? The apostle here gives us the answer to our question, "He takes away the first, that He may establish the second;" for, now, as many as believe in Jesus are brought into another and a better Paradise. They are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and there is prepared for them a place of joy and delight compared with which the bliss of Eden shall not even be mentioned, neither shall that earthly paradise be brought to mind or be spoken of anymore.

Next, *the first man has failed: but behold the second Man, the Lord from heaven;* and see again the meaning of our text: "He takes away the first, that He may establish the second." There was a man in that first paradise; he was the first man, Adam; and you and I were representatively in him; for he was the federal head of the human race. But he fell, and he was taken away. Do we regret this, and mourn over it as though it were an irreparable calamity? By no means; for the Lord has taken away the first man, Adam, that He may establish the second Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Concerning these two, the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second Man is the Lord from heaven." The first man ruined us; but we have the second Man now, who heads up His people, having become their federal Representative; and in Him they are saved beyond all fear of falling.

"He takes away the first, that He may establish the second," is illustrated again in the case of *Adam and Noah*. Adam was not only the federal head of the human race, but he was also its first father and founder; but, although God took away our first father, He gave the race a second father, even Noah, from whom we have all sprung as much as from the loins of Adam. Now, Adam's safety depended upon the perfection of a creature, the obedience of a human being; but Noah's safety lay in a figurative death, burial, and resurrection. He went into the ark, and died to that old world in which he had lived so long. Inside that ark, as in a coffin, he was buried beneath the descending floods, and he was floated into a new world, to be the father of a race that should live through his death, burial, and resurrection; as the apostle Peter says, "The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us"—not that baptism saves us, but it is another figure of how we are saved by death, burial, and resurrection, as Peter goes on to say, "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God." "He takes away the first that He may establish the second." Father Adam was taken away, but Father Noah was given to be the new head of the race, and to him the Lord said, "This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth." That second covenant, which God made with Noah, is infinitely more secure than the first covenant which was broken by Adam.

Brethren, there is another great historical instance of the rule mentioned in our text in the case of *the covenants made with the literal and the spiritual Israel*. There was a first covenant to which the Israel-

ites gave their consent soon after they came out of Egypt. That was a covenant of works, and when Moses rehearsed in the ears of the people the terms of that covenant, "All the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do." Yet they soon forgot their solemn promise. You remember how the commandments were "written with the finger of God" upon "two tablets of testimony, tablets of stone;" but when the people turned aside to worship the golden calf which Aaron had made, we read concerning Moses, "it came to pass, as soon as he came near unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses anger waxed hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mount." In God's great long-suffering, the commandments were given a second time, though Moses, and not God, wrote on the second tablets of stone, and they were put away for safety into the golden ark, above which was placed the mercy seat of pure gold. This was another symbolical illustration of our text: "He takes away the first, that He may establish the second."

The law in the hand of Moses is broken that we may have the law in the heart of Christ hidden away under the sacred covering of divine mercy in the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. The first covenant of "This do, and you shall live," is taken away, that God may establish the second, which is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The first covenant, because it waxed old, has passed away; and now God has established a second covenant, the covenant of grace: "They shall be My people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me."

Thus I might keep on showing you how, all the way along in history, there has been a first, and then there has been a second, as there was in the case of the temple at Jerusalem. Solomon built the first temple, but God permitted that to be taken away that He might establish that second temple into which Christ came, and so made the glory of the latter house to be greater than that of the former one. All history seems to me to say, "This is God's usual method of procedure, to give the dim twilight first, and then to follow it with the full glory of the noontide brightness." We must, therefore, expect that it will be so in our time.

III. But, now, leaving history in general, I come to your own individual history, so as to give you SOME INSTANCES IN YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE of the working of this rule: "He takes away the first, that He may establish the second."

First, this is true of our *own righteousness and Christ's*. I shall speak of myself because, then, I shall be speaking of many of you also. I once thought that I had a very fine righteousness of my own; and, in looking back upon it, I am not at all sure whether it was not about as respectable as the righteousness which the most of my friends have possessed. Like the young man who came to our Lord, I could have said, concerning the Ten Commandments, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" But I well recollect the time when God's Holy Spirit began to pull my righteousness away from me. Oh, how fiercely I fought to keep it! There was a terrible tugging between my pride and my conscience, for even my conscience joined with the Spirit of God, and the Word of God, in telling me that, though outwardly righteous, yet I was inwardly wicked. Still, for a long while, I could not understand and believe that I, the child of godly parents, who had never fallen asleep from the days of infancy without the repetition of the prayer my mother taught me, and who had never left my bedroom in the morning without having presented the petitions which I had learned as a child—I could not bring myself to think that I, who was so regular in attendance at the house of God, who read my Bible, who tried to understand theological books, and so on—I could not admit that I had a righteousness which was only like filthy rags, fit for nothing but to be burned. I tell you, dear friends, I did not like that ugly truth, and I fought very hard against it; but I bless God that He took away "the first" righteousness that He might establish "the second." That second—"the righteousness which is of God by faith"—the righteousness which is imputed to everyone who believes in Jesus—is so much superior to "the first" that I can truly say with the apostle Paul, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in

Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Is there anybody here who is having his righteousness tugged at as mine was? Is that beautiful but flimsy house of your own righteousness beginning to tumble around your ears? Did a big brickbat come down just now? Was there a slate or two blown off the roof, or did the chimney pots begin to fall? Thank God for it! Thank God for it! If you have a very fine robe of righteousness, all of your own weaving, I am not desirous that you should be unclothed, and left naked to your shame, but I am anxious that you should be clothed with that spotless robe which was woven in heaven; and I know that you will never wear that wondrous garment until your own dirty rags are pulled off you. Christ never comes and puts His glorious robes over our poor, beggarly, leprous rags. No; they must come off before He will clothe us, so He takes away “the first” that He may give us “the second.” O poor sinner, be wise enough to cry to Him, “Pull off my rags, Lord, if You will condescend to touch them. I do not want to keep one of them a moment longer.” As for you who are so good, and respectable, and righteous in your own esteem, I tell you plainly that those fine robes, of which you are so proud, are only rotten rags whatever you may think of them. Off with them! They must come off if you are to be saved; so ask God to take them off now, and to clothe you in that wondrous raiment which Christ has prepared for all who trust Him.

There is another first thing which God has taken away from us, and that is, *our false peace*. There are many of you who used to be perfectly happy although you were unsaved; you were full of peace, and were not disturbed in mind at all. Why should you be? You used to say to yourselves, “Well, if it goes ill with me, I am sure it will be worse for my neighbors. If I am not all right, there are very few people who are.” Yes, you said to yourself, “Peace, peace,” when there was no peace. If, sometimes, your minister preached a sermon that came rather too closely home to you, and troubled your conscience, you said to yourself, “Now, that is the kind of preaching that I do not like. I do not think I shall go to hear that man anymore; for, in my opinion, people ought not to be made as uncomfortable as I have been made.” There are some people who would never have been saved if the Holy Spirit had not broken down their refuges of lies.

There is another “first” that people do not like to lose; that is, *their fancied strength*. You thought, dear friend, that you could repent and believe in Christ whenever you pleased, and you said to yourself, “There is no hurry for me to decide to be a Christian. I can keep on attending the means of grace; and one of these days, when it is convenient, I will break my own heart, renew my own will, create myself a new creature in Christ Jesus.” That was your meaning; though, possibly, you did not express it quite so plainly. Ah! I recollect well when I first began to discover my own inability in spiritual things; it was a horrible discovery. I wanted to do good, but I found that evil was present with me. I longed to repent, but my heart was as hard as a stone. I earnestly desired to pray, but I could not pray a believing prayer; I could as easily have leaped over the moon as have prayed such a prayer by my own unaided efforts. I really wished to believe in Christ; and though now it seems as plain and simple a thing as anything can be; yet, at that time, I could no more believe in Christ than I could make a new world. Oh, the horror of having one’s strength all taken away! But what a blessed thing it is to lose all our first strength, to be reduced to utter weakness, and to be quite incapable of any spiritual action, so that Christ says to us, “Without Me you can do nothing;” and all this in order that He may establish the second and better strength, and enable us each one to say, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.”

The Lord Jesus Christ becomes a strength and a power to us when we have lost our own; but we shall never get His strength while we have our own, for He will never yoke His omnipotence with our poor pretense of power. That cannot be: “He takes away the first.” He brings you to a swooning state, He brings you to a fainting fit, He brings you to death’s door, He brings you to the very grave of your own personal confidence and strength; and then He comes in, and gives you life in Himself, and clothes you with power from on high: “He takes away the first, that He may establish the second.”

Further on in the Christian life, it often happens that the same rule holds good, that the Lord takes away many first things to establish the second. After people are converted, it frequently happens that they have a great deal *too much confidence in their minister, or in some Christian friend*. At first, it is very helpful to their infant footsteps to have a little go-cart, to which they can hold, lest they should

tumble down; but, after a while, when God means to teach them something for themselves, and to make them exercise their own judgments, perhaps He takes away that minister, or He takes away from them the pleasure that they once had in hearing him. Sometimes, I have known men so much depended upon that God has left those good men to themselves for a while, that their hearers might see what poor souls they were, and so might never depend upon them again as they had done in the past. Why does the Lord take away that comfortable repose that His poor babes enjoy on the breasts of their teachers? Why, in order that they may find a better and sweeter repose on His own breast; that they may get away from all confidence in men, and come to full confidence in the Lord their God and Savior. It is often a very hard lesson for some to learn; but it must be learned. As the apostle Paul says, “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yes, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.” There are some who seem to know Christ only by the teaching of other people; but it is far better to know Him by personal contact with Him, by coming close to Him for yourself; and that blessing is often not realized except at a great expense of things once highly prized. In that sense also our text is true: “He takes away the first, that He may establish the second.”

So, too, there is *an early joy* that young Christians have. Oh, how full of delight they are! Some of them have a great deal more of flame than they have of real fire. Just as, when a fire is first kindled, and the shavings and the sticks are burning, there is not half the fire that there will be when the coals themselves are all aglow—there is not half the fire, but there is more blaze and more crackle; so is it with many young people, they have no end of a blaze! Oh, they are so happy! They cannot tell how happy they are! But, after a while, that exuberance of joy goes, and the quiet delight in the Lord which comes afterwards, instead of it, is much more solid and deep. They can give good reasons for their joy; and though they are not as full of exhilaration as they were, their delight is really firmer, and stronger, and deeper than before: “He takes away the first, that He may establish the second.”

I have known many of God’s dear people to be very frightened by some of their first experiences. They thought they were going to be lost because their early joy had departed from them; yet there was no need for cherishing such fears. You know that children lose their first teeth; it is good that they should do so, because there is a better set coming. And, often, it is very much like that with the Christian. He has a wisdom tooth to cut that he did not cut in the first stages of his spiritual life; and the first milk teeth that he has will have to come out, some of them, with many a painful tug; but they will have to come out in order that he may grow to a spiritual manhood: “He takes away the first, that He may establish the second.”

Oh, how many things you and I still have to gain by losing! How much we are to be enriched by our losses! How we are to make progress by going backward! How we have yet to mount by sinking! How we have yet to rise by descending! Paradoxical as all this may seem, it is to be so, according to the rule laid down in our text: “He takes away the first, that He may establish the second.” There may be a lesson here, not only for young converts, but also for you who are experienced Christians. This passage may help you to understand some things which, perhaps, have seemed dark to you.

IV. Now I close by giving you some INSTANCES TO BE EXPECTED to which the rule of the text will apply: “He takes away the first, that He may establish the second.”

Let all who are of the family of Christ remember that *God will soon take away from us everything that we have here below*. He will take us away from it, which is the same thing as taking it away from us. But, as you anticipate this great change, do not look forward to it with sorrow; do not shed a single tear of regret at the thought of parting with anything that you now possess. Regret not the dear old house at home, notwithstanding all its happy associations. Mourn not that you must leave your beloved country, of which you say that, wherever you wander, it is still the joy of your heart. You will have to leave your native land, and to leave your happy home; but you may be comforted by the assurance of the text, “He takes away the first, that He may establish the second;” for there is a better country, that is, the heavenly land. We, who believe in Jesus, are citizens of the New Jerusalem; and as all earthly cities and the fair prospects of the country shall melt away from our eyes, we shall look upon a fairer land, and a more glorious city, where no fog or blight shall ever come; but where—

*“Rocks and hills, and brooks and vales,
With milk and honey flow.*

*All o'er those wide extended plains,
Shines one eternal day;
There God the Sun forever reigns,
And scatters night away.
No chilling winds, or poisonous breath,
Can reach that healthful shore:
Sickness and sorrow, pain and death,
Are felt and feared no more."*

God will take away our home on earth; but in our Father's house above there are many mansions; therefore you may go, cheerful fireside; you may go, happy home; all that was loved, all that was delighted in, may melt away, as I sing—

*"My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul! How near,
At times, to faith's foreseeing eye,
Your golden gates appear!"*

If Moses, from the top of Pisgah, was glad to die with the earthly Canaan in sight, how much more may we be happy to die with the heavenly Canaan just before us, into which we are to enter! "He takes away the first, that He may establish the second."

The Lord has been taking away from some of you *considerable portions of your family*. Some dear children, who were once nestling at your breast, are now with Him in glory. Father has also gone, and mother; husband or wife, brother or sister, some of these dear ones are gone home. The members of your family have nearly all gone now, and you are left alone. You begin to count the friends of your youth upon your fingers. God is evidently taking away "the first." But do not forget how blessedly He is establishing "the second." When you enter heaven, you will be no stranger inside those pearly gates. There will be many there, whom you knew and loved on earth, whom you will know and love above. They will meet you at the gates, and they will joy and rejoice with you before the great Father's throne.

"Alas!" says one, "I have lost all my family, and I am left alone and desolate." But if you are a child of God, remember what the apostle once wrote, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Though God has taken away that first family, He has established that second, and far more numerous, and more glorious one. "God sets the solitary in families." That is what He has done for you; He has taken away your first family connections, your first bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood, in order that He may establish the second higher relationships. He has dissolved the ties of blood that you may find better spiritual relationships among such as Jesus spoke of when He said, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." Even so we say of the saints on earth, and the saints before the throne of God in heaven, "These are sister, and brother, and father, and mother to us." "He takes away the first, that He may establish the second."

And, brothers and sisters, *this poor body of ours*, which is so full of aches and pains at times, will be taken away to make room for a more glorious one. This one is getting worn-out; some parts of it have fallen away already. It is like an old lath-and-plaster building, and cannot last much longer; it very seldom stands to the end of the ninety-nine years' lease, but it soon crumbles away; and, by and by, with all of us, the old house will fall to pieces, and be done with. Shall we fret over it? Shall our soul cry, concerning the body, "Alas, my sister! Alas, my brother"? No; "He takes away the first, that He may establish the second;" and as we have, in this body of our humiliation, borne the image of the earthy, we shall, in the second condition of this body, bear the image of the heavenly. It shall be sown in dishonor, but it shall be raised in glory. It shall be sown in weakness, but it shall be raised in power. It shall be sown a natural body, but it shall be raised a spiritual body. "He takes away the first, that He may establish the second." And, oh, what a glorious second that will be! Our resurrection body will know no pain, no weariness, no weakness, no taint of disease or sin, no possibility of corruption or death. Well may we sing—

"O glorious hour! O blest abode!"

when this poor body shall be made like unto the glorious body of Christ Jesus our Savior. "He takes away the first, that He may establish the second." Let the first go, then, without a murmur or a sigh.

Once more, *this earth shall be taken away to make room for the new one*. In a little while, there shall be heard the blast of the archangel's trumpet. I know not when or how the various closing events will happen, so as to put them together in chronological order; but I do know that, at God's bidding, this fair earth shall suddenly be wrapped in flames. It is a beautiful world, say what you will about it. In many other parts besides Ceylon—

*“Every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.”*

Wherever man squats down, and raises up his long ranges of bricks and mortar, there everything is ugly; but out yonder, in God's forests, and on God's hills, and by God's sea, there everything is fair, and grand, and Godlike, as if God Himself might come and sojourn here, and not be ashamed of the world He has made, for still it is good. But in a moment, it will be wrapped in flames, and it will be utterly consumed. Nothing of this present creation shall abide in its present condition. The apostle Peter says, “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” Yet weep not, beloved, neither lament, for Peter also says, “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” “He takes away the first, that He may establish the second;” and, on a brighter morning than your eyes have ever seen, you shall wake up and see the new heavens and the new earth; and you, with all the spirits of just men made perfect, shall come there to sing sweeter songs than the morning stars chanted when the world was first created. There will be a second creation, a second world, for the Lord will have taken away the first, but He will have established the second! The work of destruction will have been accomplished; but the work of re-creation will also have been finished; and, oh, what joy and bliss it will be for the redeemed from among men, and for the holy angels, too, when the New Jerusalem shall come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He shall dwell among them! “He takes away the first, that He may establish the second.

I close by saying that it is my earnest prayer that some of you may, by God's grace, have your “first” taken away from you this very hour, that you may have “the second” given to you. Salvation lies not in “the first.” That is all ruin and woe; the trail of the serpent is over it all. You will never go to heaven if you remain in the same nature as you had when you were born. You must be born a second time; or else, if there is not a second birth, you will have to endure the second death. God give you the grace to believe in Jesus, and to find in Him that second, higher, better life that you may enter into the second and perfect world; for, then, you will give Him all the praise forever and ever. Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—563,433, 540.

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