

EPIPHANY;

ISAIAH 60:1-6

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee. or, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but Jehovah will arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; they all gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be carried in the arms. Then thou shalt see and be radiant, and thy heart shall thrill and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee, the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels' shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praises of Jehovah.

THE CONVERSION OF THE HEATHEN

1. This epistle lesson is an exhortation to faith. It also proclaims the future world-wide preaching of the Gospel and the gathering of Christians from all nations. The prophecy is clearly intelligible and requires but little explanation.
2. The reference to the Gospel as a light, a brightness, a glory of the risen Jehovah, implies a distinction between the light of the Gospel and that of the Law. This distinction should be carefully marked, to avoid confounding the Gospel and the Law and terming "Gospel" what is Law and "Law" what is Gospel. In the Advent and the preceding epistle lessons we found the Gospel to be a proclamation of life, a doctrine of grace, a joy-giving light, promising and presenting Christ with all his blessings. But the Law is a proclamation of death, a doctrine of wrath, a sorrow-yielding light, for it reveals our sins, demanding a righteousness we cannot produce. The conscience, recognizing that it deserves death and eternal wrath, is filled with sorrow and unrest. But this prophecy of Isaiah touches the wretched conscience in a cheering way. It reanimates it, fills it with joy and liberates it from the Law and from sin.
3. So we may designate the two lights as the light of the Lord and the light of the servant. 2 Corinthians 3:13. The light of the Lord arose in Christ, and the light of the servant in Moses. Aaron and the children of Israel could not endure the light the brightness of Moses' face. He was obliged to cover it with a veil. But on Mount Tabor the face of the transfigured Christ was not intolerable. Rather, so delightful and pleasing was it that Peter in a transport of joy exclaimed: "*Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I*

will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” Matthew 17:4. There the light of Moses’ face was not intolerable, but pleasing. The Gospel renders agreeable the Law, the tutor, which before was repugnant and intolerable to human nature. This we have already heard. So Isaiah says: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come.”

4. Plainly the injunction is addressed to one not risen, one who lies sleeping or is dead. I think Paul refers to this passage when he says (Ephesians 5:14): “*Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee.*” Undoubtedly, Christ is the light of which Isaiah here speaks, and which, through the Gospel, shines in all the world, enlightening those who rise who desire him. That Jerusalem is mentioned here and not by Paul is of no significance: In the text of Isaiah “*Jerusalem*” is not found. Some one added it in the epistle, because Jerusalem, or the people of Israel were addressed by the prophets.

5. Now, who are the sleepers and the dead? Unquestionably, all who are under the Law. They are dead because of sin. Particularly are they dead who disregard the Law and live independently of restraint. The selfrighteous, who recognize not their wants and defects, are the sleepers. Both classes have little regard for the Gospel. They remain sleeping and continually die. The Spirit must awake them to recognition and acknowledge the light. But the third class, they who feel the power of the Law and the torments of the conscience, thirst after grace and sigh for the Gospel. They rest not until it comes and is given them. Then they proclaim it. Isaiah is one of these. In such manner do the sleepers and the dead awake and receive the Gospel light.

6. So Isaiah says, in effect: “*Permit yourself to be enlightened; or, Let there be light. Allow the light to fall upon you. Thou dead one, crawl not into the grave of thy filthy life that is, cease to love and to follow thine evil course of conduct that the light of the Gospel may fall upon thee and abide in thee. And thou sleeper, awake! Seek not the bed of careless and lethargic security, and of presumptuous reliance upon thine own selfrighteousness. Let the true light have some claim upon thee.*” It is necessary frequently to admonish both classes. The great hindrance of the class represented by the dead is an unrestrained life; and a secure selfrighteousness will scarcely allow the sleeping class to recognize and accept the blissful light of the Gospel.

“Thy light is come.”

7. Why does Isaiah say “thy light” when God’s light is meant, as will later appear? I answer, it is at the same time God’s light and Jerusalem’s light and the light of us all. It is God’s in that he gives it; ours in that we are enlightened by it and enjoy its rays. Similarly, Christ speaks of the sun as the Father’s (Matthew 5:45), “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good.” Again, he says (John 11:9), “If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.” That is, God’s sun enlightens the world. Again, referring to himself, he declares (John 8:12), “I am the light of the world.” Further, the light Isaiah refers to is particularly the light of Jerusalem and the children of Israel, because of the promise. He was promised only to Abraham and his seed. So Mary

sings in her Song of Praise (Luke 1:55), “As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.” In this sense, it is not the light of the heathen, unto whom no promise was made. Yet it is said they are to receive it. So the words of the promise imply, and so Isaiah here teaches.

8. Undoubtedly the prophecies of Isaiah, and of the other prophets, concerning Christ almost universally have origin in the promise God made to Abraham (Genesis 22:18), “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” These words clearly indicate that Christ, the seed of Abraham, is to be made known in all the world. For Christ to accomplish this in person was impossible; it must be done through the instrumentality of preaching. Not only was it necessary to proclaim the Gospel, but also to explain the character of the preaching to show it a proclamation of blessings and of grace, intended for the blessing of the whole world. There is evident, too, the conclusion that the seed of Abraham is true man as well as God; that he must be born of a virgin; that his kingdom cannot be temporal or of this world; and that he must die and shortly rise from the dead to Lordship over all creatures. All this apparently is briefly but explicitly concluded in this divine promise. Did time admit, it were easy to trace, in a way comprehensible to any man, the source of the prophecies to this fountain-head promise. Hence, Abraham laughed in his heart when the promise was made to him (Genesis 17:17), for he understood it. Christ indicates as much where he says concerning the patriarch’s feeling (John 8:56,) “*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.*” – “*And the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee.*”

9. We have frequently spoken of the little word “glory.” It means honor, brightness, splendor. The Gospel is simply a grand report, a noble cry, having origin in a glorious reality; it is not a mere empty proclamation. A glorious being is to be compared to a sun or a light. The sun is a fountain of light, so to speak, and its luster is the glory, the diffusion, the distinction of that light. The luster may be called the natural expression of the sun, the sole medium whereby the sun is recognized in the world through which it is diffused. Similarly, the glory of an individual is the fountain, the sun, the foundation, of his glorious reputation. His reputation is the luster of his glory. It is the medium whereby he is proclaimed, extolled, recognized as glorious. This much, you will perceive, is implied in the word “glory” honor, renown, brilliancy.

10. Thus the Gospel is God’s glory and our light. It is our light in that it reveals to us God, ourselves and all else. It is God’s glory in that it is the medium whereby his work all his glorious doings are proclaimed, extolled, recognized and honored in the whole world.

11. But, carrying the analogy to a finer point, it might be necessary to say that the Gospel is not the actual brightness of the light, nor is it the light itself. It is the rising of the brightness, the approach of the light. It is simply a manifestation of the light and brightness which existed from eternity. As said in John 1:4, “*In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*” The light did not arise, nor was it openly manifested, except through the Gospel. Therefore, the Gospel is an expression, a cry, of divine brightness and glory. The Scriptures, in Psalm 29:3, in Psalm 68:33 and often elsewhere, call it the voice of God. It is called “Gospel” good message because it reveals and proclaims divine

blessings, divine glory and divine honor or brightness. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.” Psalm 19:1. And what do we understand by proclaiming and revealing, except the proclaiming of the Gospel through the heavens the preaching of it by the apostles? What is the brightness, the work, of God but the great and glorious riches of his goodness and grace poured out upon us? Paul says (Titus 2:11), “The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men.” How has it appeared? Through the preaching of the Gospel. Such seems to be the import of the words of Isaiah, “Thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee.” That is, the light and glory of God are revealed are preached to you. Christ is the light and the glory, according to the words, “*And the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee,*” or is revealed. Again, verse 20 of this chapter, “Jehovah will be thine everlasting light.”

12. Now, the light and the glory are God himself. For Christ says (John 8:12), “I am the light.” We heard before, in the epistle for Christmas, that Christ is the effulgence of divine glory. Plainly, then, Isaiah is not here speaking of the rising of Christ in the sense of his coming birth. He refers to the rising of the Gospel after Christ’s ascension. Through the Gospel Christ is spiritually risen and glorified in the hearts of all believers, bringing them salvation. The Scriptures make more frequent reference to his rising in this sense than they do to the birth of Christ. The Gospel is the important feature. On account of it was Christ born. Upon it Paul bases his teaching. He says that God beforetime promised the Gospel concerning his Son, through his prophets, in the holy Scriptures.

13. We learn from our text here what the Gospel is and what is its message. It is the coming of light, the rising of divine glory. It speaks only of divine glory, divine honor and fame. It exalts only the work of God his goodness and grace toward us. It teaches the necessity of our receiving God’s work for us, his grace and goodness, even God himself, if we would secure salvation. The Gospel produces in us a twofold effect. First, it rejects our natural reason, our human light. It conclusively shows them to be mere darkness. Had we within ourselves light instead of darkness, it would not be necessary for God to send the light to rise upon us. Light enlightens, not light, but darkness. This epistle lesson forcibly expels and severely condemns all natural wisdom, all human reason, heathen arts and the doctrines and laws of man. Conclusively, these are absolute darkness, since it is necessary for the light to come. So we should guard against all human doctrines and the conceits of reason as darkness rejected and condemned by God, and should wake and arise to behold only this light, to follow it alone.

14. Second, the Gospel casts down all the glory of and pride in our own works, our efforts, our free will. We cannot draw comfort nor derive honor from these. On the contrary, they but contribute to our shame in the sight of God. If there were in ourselves anything worthy of honor and glory, vainly would the divine honor and glory rise upon us. Since the latter are called for, clearly there is in us nothing but what is productive of our shame. Paul says on this point (Romans 3:23), “*All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.*” In other words, “*Men may, it is true, have their own nature and their self-righteousness, and from these derive temporal honor, praise and glory before their*

fellows, as if not sinners. But before God they are sinful, destitute of divine glory and unable to boast possession of him and his blessings.”

15. Now, no one can be saved unless he have within himself the glory of God and be able to comfort himself solely with God and his blessings, and to glory in these. “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Jeremiah 9:24, and 2 Corinthians 10:17. Such is the rising of divine glory. So the Gospel condemns all our efforts and exalts only the goodness and the grace of God in other words, God himself. It permits us to console ourselves only with him and to glory in no other. As Psalm 144:15 has it, *“Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah.”* No one else is called happy. Accordingly it follows here in Isaiah: *“For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but Jehovah will arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.”*

16. Here the prophet clearly implies that wherever Christ is not, there darkness exists, whatever the appearance of brilliance. Nor does he allow the medium devised by the high schools, which say that between darkness and Christ exists the light of nature and of human reason. They ascribe darkness only to the grossly wicked and the weak-minded. They highly value this mediatory light, claiming it is a sufficient preparation for the light of Christ, and that although it is darkness in comparison to the light of Christ, yet it is in itself light. They do not perceive how far they err in imagining themselves enlightened. Usually the most erroneous of the schools are the most rational. *“The sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light,”* as Christ says in Luke 16:8. Yet they of the schools are not nearer the true light than are others. Rather they are farther from it. This could not be if the light of reason were helpful in obtaining the true light. Devils are wiser, more artful and crafty, than men; yet they are not therefore better. No, that kind of light is always at enmity with the true light. As Paul tells us (Romans 8:7): *“The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be.”*

17. Therefore, God knew of no better way to deal with the pernicious light of reason than utterly to condemn and obscure it. Paul says (Corinthians 1:19-20): *“For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent... Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”* In this same chapter Isaiah 1:19, we have: *“The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but Jehovah will be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.”* What is this but a rejection of all temporal wisdom? Away with babbling about natural light. Give close heed to the words of Isaiah and to other Scriptures which teach us to flee from the light of reason as from darkness and from an enemy of the true light. Human reason is the light which teaches the Jews, and all tyrants, to persecute and torture Christ and his saints, and which cannot, even to this day, endure the true light. Human reason always claims to be in the right and to be light, when really it is darkness and condemned by the true light. Being condemned, in its rage it instigates all forms of evil.

18. But the weak-minded may ask: *“How can it be that all natural reason teaches is darkness? Plainly, three and two are five, are they not? Again, if a man make a coat, is he not wise to make it of cloth, or foolish to make it of paper? Is he not wise who marries a godly woman, and he foolish who marries a godless one? And are there not similar instances innumerable in human affairs? Never can you persuade me that all natural reason is darkness. Even Christ implies that it is light, when he says (Matthew 7:24 and 26): ‘Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock... And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.’ Now, if the builder upon the rock is in darkness, who builds wisely? Again, Christ says of the unjust steward who had wasted his lord’s goods that he acted wisely in taking the course he did in regard to his master’s debtors. Luke 16:8. And Paul reminds the Corinthians (Corinthians 11:5, 14-15) that nature teaches us a woman should not, in the church, pray with uncovered head.”*

19. I answer: This is all true, but it is necessary to make a distinction between God and men, between spiritual and temporal things. In earthly, human affairs man’s judgment suffices. For these things, he needs no light but that of reason. Hence God does not in the Scriptures teach us how to build houses, to make clothing, to marry, to wage war, to sail the seas, and so on. For these, our natural light is sufficient. But in divine things, the things concerning God, and in which we must conduct ourselves acceptably with him and must secure happiness for ourselves, human nature is absolutely blind, staring stone-blind, unable to recognize in the slightest degree what these things are. Natural reason presumptuously plunges into them like a blind horse. But all its conclusions are, as certainly as God lives, false and erroneous. In this capacity it proceeds like a man who builds on sand, or one who would use cobwebs for garments. Isaiah 59:6. It employs sand for meal in making bread. It sows wind and reaps the whirlwind, as Hosea 8:7 has it. It measures the atmosphere with a spoon, carries light into the cellar upon a tray, weighs flames in a balance, performing all manner of perverted nonsense ever known or possible to be devised. For all its efforts are designed as service to God and they must utterly fail.

20. Ask nature what is necessary to please God and to be saved, and it replies: *“Truly, you must build churches, cast bells, institute masses, observe vigils, make chalices, pyxes, images and ornaments; must burn candles, pray so long a time, fast in honor of St. Catharine, become a priest or a monk, go to Rome and to St. Jacob, wear hair-shirts, torture yourself, and so on. Such are good works and true ways to salvation.”* But if you ask for proof that these things are acceptable with God, reason is unable to give any other reply than that it thinks them acceptable. This doctrine is sheer imagination; more, it is gloom, it is darkness. It is what Isaiah refers to as “darkness” and “gross darkness.” Into it must fall all who do not accept the divine light. It is impossible for them to do anything that shall be right in the sight of God.

21. Nothing is more offensive to God than the presumption that gross darkness is light, and the protest that it is darkness. It persecutes or puts to death all who defend the truth at this vital point. It cannot tolerate the true light. From that error arises all idolatry. The Jews had their Baal, their Moloch, Ashtaroath, Camon Peor and numberless idols of the sort. Jeremiah tells them (Jeremiah 2:28), “According to the number of thy cities are thy gods”; and Hosea says (Hosea 10:1), “According to the abundance of his fruit he hath multiplied his altars”; and again Isaiah (Isaiah 2:8), “Their land also is full of idols.”

22. All this the Jews meant only for divine service. They presumed thereby to serve the true God. Consequently the prophets who denounced their conduct were slain by them as destroyers of the divine service and blasphemers against God. But their services of God were instituted according to the dictates of human nature and not according to God’s commands. In the true service of God, he himself will be the light and accepts only the worship he has instituted and commanded. We read (Leviticus 10:2) how Nabad and Abihu, sons of Aaron, were consumed by fire at the altar even though they were God-ordained priests and had transgressed no farther than to put strange, or unconsecrated, fire into their censers; a thing, however, not in accordance with the commandment of God. And just as little will God tolerate us when we style as divine service what he has not so appointed, and when we recognize it as such. What else does he who presumes so to do, but make of God an idol? He imagines him to be of his opinion, and forms in his mind his own God, presuming that God must be delighted with anything he devises. Such a proceeding is but changing God’s will and perverting his design to accord with our will and our design. It is mocking God and regarding him as man of straw, a specter or wooden image, to be changed and fashioned at our pleasure. This is a thing God will by no means allow. He will not permit us to make of him an image an idol; the first commandment makes that plain. Nor will he allow us to misuse his name, as the second commandment clearly shows. And both commandments are just and right. Hence it is impossible for us to please God thus, according to the dictates of nature. Indeed, such conduct is in the highest degree presumptuous, and of all things the most offensive to God.

THE TRUE LIGHT

23. Recognizing this distinction concerning the things of God and man, there can be no difficulty in discerning between the true light and the false. Whatever is not commanded of God is to be most carefully avoided, though ordained of angels or saints. For the most part, the laws of the Pope and the orders of the ecclesiasts must be false. For in the main they are but human devices relating to outward works not commanded of God. Idolatry is more prevalent in the world today than it was in the Jews’ time. Men presume to serve God in this humanly-appointed way, notwithstanding it is wholly wrong.

24. Divine light teaches us to trust in God, to believe in him, to leave all to him, to submit readily to his workings, to accept whatever in his providence may present, bearing all and performing every duty, and to serve our neighbor throughout life. With such faith there is

no difference in works; all works are alike. Having faith, well may we serve God in erecting buildings, in planting and threshing, in performing any sort of external works. These things are the proper expression of faith, of divine light. God regards them as service to him, as devotional conduct. So little, however, does human nature, man's reason, know of the truth, that it proceeds to condemn this faith as error and heresy. It accepts the works it beholds in the beloved saints and the orders, but is unable and unwilling to recognize those works as wrought under the influence of the divine light the faith they condemn. Thus they make of the examples of the saints idols for themselves, and irrevocably persist in their blindness and idolatry. Hence Solomon gives the wholesome instruction (Proverbs 3:5), "*Lean not upon thine own understanding*"; again (Proverbs 3:7), "Be not wise in thine own eyes," which thought Paul expresses (Romans 12:16) as, "Be not wise in your own conceits."

25. The introduction to the Pope's laws teaches this principle of relying not upon one's own understanding. But his object is, by these Scripture warnings to intimidate the world from rejecting his foolish laws, the right and essential thing to do, however. His object is to lead captive the minds of men, and to have them regard him alone as wise and to follow him in disregard of the wisdom of God. His laws are mere human devices and directly opposed to the doctrine of Solomon and of Paul. He forbids everyone to think for himself, and yet abominably enforces his own opinions in all the world. Solomon means that we are to be taught neither of ourselves nor of any human reasoning or device, but only of God our Lord. Whatsoever is not taught of God we are to avoid as darkness. He cannot tolerate an assistant in teaching and doing divine things. He intends to be himself the teacher, the light, that our faith may be pure, our understanding of divine matters clear.

26. In temporal affairs, however, one may do differently. You may learn from the carpenter, or teach yourself, how to construct a building; from a painter you may learn to paint; from a shoemaker, to make shoes; from a scribe, to write. But how to serve God, how all works become good this you must learn, not from man, but from God. God teaches you to believe in him and to love your neighbor, in all your works. Men teach you to work without faith and to love only yourself, forgetting God and your neighbor.

27. Such, you perceive, is the meaning of Isaiah where he says, "*Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples.*" He cannot be understood as speaking of literal darkness; the sun has continued to give its light. He has reference to a darkness opposed to that light whereof he says, "Thy light is come," and, "*Jehovah will arise upon thee.*" Now, they upon whom Jehovah has not risen, upon whom he has not shone, are in darkness. The darkness here meant is simply unbelief, the darkness of human reason; just as the light represents Christ, or faith in Christ whereby Christ dwells in the heart, as Paul says. Ephesians 3:17. Similarly, the reference here to the earth does not mean the material earth; the material earth was not darkened through Christ. The meaning is, earthly or worldly men; men who do not believe, do not accept Christ through the Gospel; men who remain in their earthly conceptions, in the natural light of reason, as Isaiah himself explains when he says: "Gross darkness shall cover the peoples."

28. But what is implied? Were not men in darkness previous to the advent of Christ? If he, through the Gospel, brought the light, how is it that darkness made its first appearance at that time? We must remember that Isaiah is speaking only of the Jewish people. He divides them into two classes. One class enjoys the light and the other is overwhelmed in darkness. This was really the case. So he speaks of “the earth” and “the peoples.” David, too, says concerning them (Psalm 2:1-2), “Why do the nations meditate a vain thing against Jehovah and against his anointed?” The entire people of Israel awaited Christ. In the shadows of the Law, through Christ, they enjoyed light. But with his coming their condition apparently was reversed. The majority of them fell, entering but deeper darkness. Previous to Christ’s advent was the light of the Law, in which Christ was promised to the Jews. But when he came in fulfillment thereof, they continued to cling to that Law, to still look for his coming. In this way they seem to have lost what they once recognized, the meaning of the Law. And so it befell them as befalls one who leaves far behind him the light properly going before, or the light that once preceded him, and now goes deeper into darkness, without that light. He who has his eyes fixed on a light before him, however far away, may see where he is going. But he who leaves the light behind, who turns his back upon it, walks toward the darkness, not seeing his objective point.

29. Such is the conduct of the Jews, who have behind them the Law shining upon Christ now come. They reject its Christ-revealing light, expecting it to shine for them upon another Christ yet to come. Thus they are without light. Their expectation will come to naught. The Law points to no other Christ. So Isaiah declares the earth covered with “darkness” and even with “gross darkness.” He indicates that the wretched Jews are not only blind, but covered with gross darkness; the light rises not upon them. The Gospel is not preached to the Jews; they are unwilling to hear it. Christ the light does not, through the Gospel, rise upon them. They remain covered in their unbelief without preaching and instruction. God says on this point (Isaiah 5:6), “*I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.*” In other words, no preacher shall speak to them concerning Christ. This condition, you see, is not merely experiencing the darkness of unbelief; it is being covered with that darkness, hearing no preaching whereby the light might rise. O terrible prophecy, awful example, for all rejecters of the Gospel!

30. Yet Isaiah says, “Jehovah will arise upon thee.” Not the entire nation was blinded. From it is derived the better and greater portion of the Christian Church the apostles, the evangelists and numerous saints. These are not in darkness, nor covered with darkness. To them Jehovah was preached, and with the result that his glory is manifest in them. Isaiah does not say merely, The glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee, but, It “shall be seen upon thee.” Not only was the glory of Jehovah revealed to the Church a revelation embracing even the unbelieving Jews but it appeared to them, and they knew him and his glory. They held these fast. Therefore the rising of the light the Gospel was not taken from them.

31. Apparently we are to understand Isaiah as referring in the latter part of the text to the fruits of the preached Gospel, and in the first part to the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel arose, admonishing men to arise. After its advent some became so hardened, so

overwhelmed in darkness, that the light did not again arise upon them; it was no more preached to them. But others were enlightened and continued in that illumination. Such has ever been the case unto this day with reference to the preaching of Christ and the Gospel. Some accept it and are enlightened. Others the majority of them condemn it as error and turn from it. Consequently they are overwhelmed in their unbelief. The Gospel is no longer proclaimed to them and they are not disposed to hear it. Truly, then, they must be concealed from the rising illumination of this light.

32. Let no one regard this as new or strange. The Scripture is unchangeable *“Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples.”* If this was true of the chosen people, the Jews, the natural seed of Abraham, to how much greater degree may it be true of us heathen, descendants from one of different blood and nature! We see today that the people will permit no one to preach to them what the Pope and his followers have condemned; they will not tolerate it. Therefore they remain covered in their darkness. They have their own preaching wherewith they foster and conceal their blindness. And it befalls them as they desire, as it befell the Jews.

“And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”

33. When the majority of the Jews refused to cultivate the fruits of the Gospel and fruit essentially accompanies the Gospel and continued in their blindness, the Gospel expanded into all the world, gathering the gentiles in place of the blinded and fallen Jews. So says Isaiah in this verse, the accomplished fulfillment of which renders it clear. The heathen nations embraced Christianity and by genuine faith walked in Christ the true light. Such was the increase of the Gospel fruit that even kings, the most exalted of earth, humbled themselves under the faith. The revelation of these future conditions was made that preachers might not be unduly elated over their conversion of kings, or any other, as if they had accomplished it of themselves. God foresaw it all and caused it to be revealed. Besides, he promised the Gospel.

34. This prophecy of Isaiah had strong fulfillment in former times. Many of the nobility and of high standing among the gentiles embraced Christianity. Today, however, so perverted are these nations by the Turks and the Pope, the prophecy seems to have little bearing. And it is a remarkable fact that even other heathen nations have been led astray by the converted gentiles. But it is revealed that Antichrist shall mislead the entire Christ-restored world.

35. What is the import of the phrase, *“to the brightness of thy rising?”* The prophet styles Christ the glory, or brightness, of the rising; that is, of the Gospel. For the Gospel will be continually advanced and preached; it will ever rise to oppose human doctrines, doctrines formerly in the highest degree dangerous to kings and holders of lofty positions. Upon these individuals first the evil spirit seizes with his perversions and human doctrines. Having them in his power, he can easily drag along with them the common, illiterate people. Thus the Pope first grasped kings and princes and then the masses. He could not have accomplished it had the Gospel continued to rise. No such thing was wrought when the Gospel first arose. But now it has set, and human doctrines have come up. None today

walk in God's light. *"Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: they all gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be carried in the arms."*

36. Now, the prophet is about to enumerate the countries where gentiles are converted to the faith. From the fact of his calling upon Jerusalem to lift up her eyes round about and see, it is easily evident he refers to spiritual sons and daughters, men and women who believe in Christ. Likewise the assembling of these must be understood in a spiritual sense. They did not bodily come to Jerusalem, but they believed with heart and spirit in the light risen upon her and round about her. No man can come to the light upon his material feet. Otherwise all the inhabitants of Jerusalem would have been enlightened; but the fact is, as before stated, they for the most part remained in blindness and darkness. The light being spiritual, we are forced to conclude that the children, the gathering and the future, must also be understood in a spiritual sense. Were we not to regard the light spiritual, we would have to accept the reference to the gathering of the children in a physical rather than a spiritual sense, as the words imply. But with the light spiritualized, the gathering and the coming are spiritualized, and so, too, must the children be regarded. The seed of Abraham, his natural children, did not come to the light from the mere fact of their flesh-and-blood descent; they came because they were his spiritual children, as stated in our last sermon.

37. The clause *"Thy sons shall come from far"* implies spiritual children from among the heathen. The apostles Peter and Paul allude to the heathen as far away, and to the Jews as near. *"Ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ."* Ephesians 2:13. Again (Ephesians 2:17), *"He came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh."* The reason for this distinction seems to be that the Jews had the Law and the promises of God concerning Christ, and the heathen had not. Now, it being impossible for the heathen to be the natural children of Abraham, or of Jerusalem, Isaiah's allusion to them here must certainly be in a spiritual sense.

38. Similarly, when he admonishes Jerusalem to lift up her eyes round about and see, he does not address the material city of Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem is not the mother of these spiritual children. She is a murderess of mother, father and children. Isaiah refers to the spiritual mother the assembly of the apostles and of all holy Christian Jews. This assembly is the Christian Church. It is spoken of as "Jerusalem" because it originated in that city, assembling there first and thence extending throughout the world. A definite place of origin was necessary to Christianity and the spread of the Gospel. The Gospel began in Jerusalem, in the midst of its worst enemies.

39. Isaiah's meaning seems to be: *"Look round about thee, unto the four quarters of the world. I will expand thee into all the earth, and thy children shall dwell everywhere."* The words of the text were designed to comfort the first Christians at Jerusalem in view of the fact that they were few in number, despised and in the midst of those who, when they should have been their best friends, were their enemies, as appears later on this same chapter. It was seemingly absurd for so small a band to attempt an undertaking so vast and unusual and to defy the overwhelming masses.

40. The Jews thought soon to check the efforts of the Christians, even to exterminate them. They began everywhere the work of persecution, expulsion and slaughter, presuming it easy to root out these poor and powerless people. Foolishly, they failed to see how they but fanned the fire already kindled, and scattered it world-wide. Their violence only helped to fulfill this God-directed prophecy of Isaiah against themselves. Their persecution drove Christians into all the world and extended the Gospel until everywhere the sons and daughters of Jerusalem were gathered to the light.

41. To accomplish an object with eminent success through the instrumentality of an enemy is characteristic of the divine hand. By the very fact of their furious attempts to exterminate the Word and the people of God, men but destroy themselves and only further God's Word and his people. Therefore, it is good and profitable, to have enemies and persecutors for the sake of the faith and the Word of God. Incalculable comfort and benefit result. Psalm 2:1 is in point here: "Why do the nations rage, and the peoples meditate a vain thing" against Christ? The thought is, they violently strive to exterminate Christ, and fail to see that in so doing they but strengthen him.

42. Isaiah's message here to his beloved Jerusalem is, practically: "Fear not, grieve not. Cast not down your eyes, but joyfully raise them and look about. Be not misled by the fact that your nearest relatives are your worst enemies, seeking to exterminate you and regarding you too mean to dwell among them. Let them go on in their rage. Where they kill one among you, a thousand shall rise in his place. Where they drive one away, he shall return with many thousands. If they extinguish the Gospel at one point, it will spring up in ten others. At length, without their consent and with no thanks to them, you shall everywhere have sons and daughters to fill the places of those others now become enemies. Thus ultimately you shall be strengthened and multiplied, and your enemies shall be diminished even to extermination. Their evil designs for you shall fall upon themselves and you shall enjoy what they begrudge you. We see plainly the complete fulfillment of this prophecy. *"Then thou shalt see and be radiant, and thy heart shall thrill and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee, the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee."*

43. By "the abundance of the sea," we must understand, not the water of the sea itself, but the inhabitants of the country bordering on the sea. As, for instance, we might say that the whole Rhine is risen up, when we mean the people of the country adjacent to the Rhine. Scripture usage, notwithstanding there are many seas in the world, terms the Mediterranean Sea simply "the sea," while it designates the Red Sea by its particular and full name. Geographers give the Mediterranean that name because of its position. It lies midway between the continents, west of Asia. On the left, or the north, are Spain, France, Italy, Greece and Asia Minor, as far as Cilicia. On the right, or the south, are Africa and Egypt, as far as Palestine. The sea is touched on both sides by great countries, powerful kingdoms. It has numerous islands Candia, Rhodes, Cyprus, now for the most part in control of the Turks. The Mediterranean is, as we said, in the Scriptures called "the sea." It is west of the Jewish country; for Palestine is at the end of the sea in the east.

44. The people of the territory bordering this sea, particularly those on the north, are scripturally given the general term “gentiles.” To those on the south and to the east the Scriptures give particular names. To the gentiles we belong, as do all on the north, or left side, of the sea. Paul, in Timothy 1:11 and elsewhere, calls himself a preacher and apostle to the gentiles. To this section of the country on the north side of the sea, he preached. To it he addressed all his epistles. He did not go south of the sea. Isaiah refers to these gentiles or nations when he says, “The abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee, the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee.” “The abundance of the sea” is synonymous with “the wealth of the nations.” Thus he shows we are not to understand by the former expression “water” but “peoples.”

45. Again, “wealth of the nations” does not signify their strength, or power. Of what advantage would that be to the Church? The reference is to great multitudes. We are wont to call a large quantity of coin “a power of money”; that is, a great pile of money. Likewise here “wealth” of the nations means a great mass or multitude of them. Again, we speak of the lord of a great country, one who rules over vast territory and many peoples, as a “mighty” lord. This prophecy of Isaiah was largely fulfilled through the instrumentality of Paul our apostle. Through his preaching “the abundance of the sea” was converted and “the wealth of the nations” came into the faith. The latter part of this verse is designed to explain who are the sons and daughters that come from afar; namely, the abundance of the gentiles on the great Mediterranean, whom Paul converted. Thus we have further evidence that the coming to Jerusalem is not to be literally understood. How could such a multitude, such an “abundance,” such a “wealth,” gather within the limits of that single city, to say nothing of dwelling there permanently? Isaiah says the abundance of the sea shall be “converted,” or turned about. The thought is of a facing about. The word itself is opposed to the idea of a literal gathering of the gentiles at Jerusalem. The “turning about” is the assembling. Before, they were turned to the world; now they are changed, turned to the Church.

46. Again, Isaiah uses the Hebrew term “Hamon” when he speaks of the abundance of the sea. The word implies mass, or abundance. Undoubtedly there is a connection here with the promise God made to Abraham that he should be the father of many nations, or gentiles. For God said (Genesis 17:5): “Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee.” God adds the first letter of the word “Hamon” to “Abram,” making it “Abraham,” and gives us a reason for the change that Abraham should be the father “Hamon”; that is, the father of a multitude of nations. He says with Isaiah, in effect: He shall be the father, “Hamon,” of the sea a father of a multitude of nations. Accordingly, Paul in his epistles urges the statement that through faith the gentiles are the children, the seed of Abraham, according to the promise of God. Isaiah has reference to this promise and describes its fulfillment. At first the patriarch was called “Abram,” a father of the high, or exalted father. Afterward he was named “Abraham,” a father of the abundance, or multitude, of the gentiles. In the gentiles was completed his exaltation.

47. But why does the prophet here multiply words: “Then thou shalt see and be radiant, and thy heart shall thrill and be enlarged”? What is implied by “see,” “being radiant,” and “the heart thrilling and being enlarged”? These are terms of comforting promise. Hebrew usage makes the word “see” expressive of satisfaction of mind over accomplished desire. For instance (Psalm 54:7), *“And mine eye hath seen my desire upon mine enemies.”* That is, *“I see what I have long desired for my enemies, namely, their suppression and the perpetuation of the truth.”* Again (Psalm 37:34): *“When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it” “then thou shalt see what thou didst desire.”* And again (Psalm 35:21): *“Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me; they said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.”* In other words, *“Indeed, what pleasure! We have long desired to see it.”* So here we interpret *“Then thou shalt see,” etc.,* to mean: *“You are now a poor, weak little band. Your enemies see what they desire for you. You desire to see yourselves great and numerous, but you may not yet. You must behold for a little time what you do not desire to behold. Afterward you shall see and they shall not. When the multitude of the sea shall be turned to you, then you will see what you have long desired to behold, and your enemies shall not witness what they have so ardently desired concerning you. You must have patience for a time, seeing not. You must endure apparent insignificance and bear the cross.”*

48. The expression is a natural one. Our eyes are prone to turn away from what we do not wish to see; but toward the things we desire they pleasantly and readily turn, to admire and enjoy. Hence the proverb, “Where the heart is, the eyes turn.” We may aptly say, “He does not see,” when we mean, “It does not please him.” Of all our members, the eyes are the best index of the heart’s pleasure or displeasure. 49. The word “radiant” here also implies pleasure and comfort. For it is said of one who is successful and delighted, his countenance is radiant.

Whatever is soft is pliable and yielding; but that which is dry, hard and rough is inflexible and suggestive of trouble and displeasure. Isaiah’s thought is, then: “You shall see what is pleasing to your heart, and consequently be filled with delight. Your pleasure will make you radiant to perform your duty and to endure all things joyfully, cheerfully and promptly, without trouble or unpleasantness.” This is the fruit of the Spirit, the outcome of the comfort the divine promise yields. Thereby all men are rendered mild, happy and radiant, and always content with their circumstances.

50. In the third place, how does the statement, “Thy heart shall thrill,” or be amazed, accord with the thought of pleasure? Real pleasures, those so great as to exceed our thoughts and desires, induce a thrill of amazement in their very transcendence of our expectations. When at Peter’s preaching the Holy Spirit fell on the gentiles on Cornelius and his company according to Luke (Acts 10:45) they *“were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* The gift was something they did not in the least expect. Similarly, Isaiah says that Jerusalem in her great joy shall be thrilled with amazement in heart, because of the vast multitude of gentiles joining themselves unto such a poor little persecuted flock.

51. Fourth: “Thy heart... shall be enlarged.” Plainly, this phrase suggests true greatness, security and freedom. These things are the result of the comfort of the Spirit and the joy of heart experienced when God does for us in excess of our expectations and desires. Such is God’s way of doing, as Isaiah here teaches. And similarly Paul says (Ephesians 3:20) that God always does “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” And thus did God deal with this his little flock. He permitted the small band to be persecuted and decreased until apparently it was destitute of life and influence. But almost before one might face about, Christianity had spread throughout the world and surpassed in strength and influence all its enemies. This is amazing in our eyes.

“The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; and they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praises of Jehovah.”

52. Having mentioned the nations coming from the “abundance of the sea,” west of Jerusalem, Isaiah now refers to the nations that are to come from the east. Midian, Ephah, Sheba, the countries where men travel with camels, lie east of Jerusalem. We read (Genesis 25:2-4) that Abraham had six sons by his third wife, Keturah: Zimran, Jokshan, Medam, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. The fourth son, Midian, begat Ephah and Epher. There we have two, Midian and Ephah, of whom Isaiah here speaks. Also we read there that the second son, Jokshan, begat Sheba and Dedan. Again, we read (Genesis 10:1, 6-7) that Noah begat Shem, Ham and Japheth; that Ham begat Cush and his brethren, and Cush begat Raamah; and that Raamah begat Sheba and Dedan. These last two names are the same as those of Abraham’s sons. Now, it is doubtful, and must ever be, whether Isaiah here refers to the Sheba who sprang from Abraham, or to Ham’s descendant. That, however, is of little importance. It comes to pass on earth that nation routs nation, and one occupies the other’s territory, as private property in cities changes hands, is bought and sold, or passes from one landlord to another. As said before, the countries east of Jerusalem are variously named; not designated by the general name “gentiles” as are the Mediterranean countries. They are called Chedar, Nabajoth, Midian, Ephah, Ishmael, Ammon, Edom, Moab, Sheba, according to their primary lords. Moses says (Genesis 25:2-6) that Abraham separated from Isaac the sons of his wife Keturah and sent them toward the east. Hence undoubtedly they occupied many of the countries mentioned, Midian, Ephah and Sheba becoming the most important.

53. In the Latin and Greek geographies these people are called Arabs. They divide all Arabia into three parts: Arabia Deserta, Arabia Petrea and Arabia Felix; or, desert Arabia, stony Arabia and fertile Arabia. Desert Arabia lies between Egypt and Judea, east of the sea. It was through this section Moses led the children of Israel. In the Hebrew it alone is called Arabia, for the word means “desert.” Stony Arabia lies east of and touching the Jordan. It includes a large territory. But Isaiah does not here refer to either of these countries. Fertile and greater Arabia, far distant from Judea and beyond desert and stony Arabia, is called in the Hebrew “Sheba.” Whether it derives its name from the son of Abraham or from the son of Ham is immaterial. Ephah is a portion of fertile Arabia. From this Arabia, or from Sheba, came the Turk Mohammed. His sepulcher is there in

the city of Mecca. The country is called fertile, or rich, from its abundance of precious gold, fine fruits and particularly frankincense, something produced nowhere else in the world. The Queen of Sheba brought frankincense with many other costly spices, to King Solomon. 1 Kings 10:2. The Sultan is today its absolute ruler, though he is not such in the eyes of all the Turks. This is the Sheba and this the Ephah to which Isaiah here refers. Their inhabitants used camels and dromedaries. Midian, however, was a neighboring country, bordering like them on the Red Sea, and lying between Egypt and fertile Arabia.

54. The thought of Isaiah is that camels and dromedaries shall come out of Sheba and Midian, spreading in multitudes over the country, as a vast army covers the land, moving or encamped. And the idea is not of riderless droves. Caravans are indicated by the explanatory sentences: "All they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord." In other words: "In such vast numbers shall the inhabitants of Midian and Ephah come, the multitude of their camels and dromedaries shall cover thy country. And why speak only of Midian and Ephah, portions of Arabia? For all, every part, of fertile Arabia shall come."

55. It may be asked: Is the reference to actual camels and dromedaries? Did they bring material gold and incense? Did the entire inhabitants of fertile Arabia really come to Jerusalem? We must admit that we do not read of any of these things literally coming to pass. Many explain the passage as referring to the wise men who came to Jerusalem from that country after the birth of Christ, as the Gospel relates. But it cannot be said of these few that their camels covered the country in great multitude. Nor were they the entire population of Sheba; they were but a small fraction of the people. We must not interpret spiritually unless necessary. But since these events have never transpired literally, nor may we reasonably expect that they ever will; since it is a thing inconsistent with natural law that the whole population of Sheba shall actually come to Jerusalem a mighty nation assembling in one city; since the foregoing portion of the chapter has reference merely to the spiritual light of the Gospel and of faith, and to a spiritual assembling and coming, and since the gathering to the Church is not by any means to be understood to refer to Christ's physical person considering all this, we shall maintain the same method of the interpretation, feeling satisfied that the facts force us to spiritualize this latter part of the chapter. We understand, then, the Christian Church shall see and be radiant, her heart shall thrill and be enlarged, when not only the abundance of the sea on the west shall be gathered to Jerusalem, but also the greatest and richest people of Arabia from the east. Further, many other things in the chapter inconsistent with a literal coming force the spiritual conclusion upon us. For instance, verse 7: "All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee; they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar." Again, verse 10: "And foreigners shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee." These things have never occurred in a literal sense, nor will they ever occur.

56. Therefore, Isaiah's meaning must be: "The people of the great country Arabia shall come in vast numbers to the faith of the Gospel, offering up themselves and all they possess their camels and dromedaries, their gold, incense and other things." For true

Christians will always give up themselves and all they have to serve Christ and his followers. Note, among ourselves, the generous donations made to the Church, and how all freely and willingly surrender self and property to Christ and his. Paul mentions the same practice among the Philippians and the Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 8:1 ff.

57. The passage includes the greatest, richest nations, the most numerous and powerful people, on earth the abundance of the sea and the wealth of the nations. In respect to numbers and power, these represent the heart of the earth's inhabitants. Arabia is regarded the richest and grandest nation of the world. The thought is, the whole world will be converted to the faith. Even were we to regard the gold, the incense and the camels in a strictly literal sense, we must still understand the "coming" and the "bringing" as suggesting the spiritual Jerusalem. As to what the spiritual interpretation is, we leave that for the Gospel to teach us. The phrase "All they from Sheba" does not imply that individually they will all become believers, but that the country as a whole will accept Christianity. There must remain, of course, some unbelieving individuals. Similarly we may say of Germany, which has abandoned its old heathen customs, that the country is now Christian. Though only the minority are true Christians, yet for the sake of these we call the German nation Christian. Again, the Jewish people as a whole were called the people of God (Numbers 25) when many of them worshiped idols.

58. Finally, Isaiah says, "They shall proclaim the praises of Jehovah." The true, the special, work of a Christian is to confess his sins and his shame, and to proclaim God's grace and work in himself. No man who fails to behold God's grace and this light of the Gospel, can show forth God's honor and praise. No man who clings to his own light, his own human nature, who values his own works, his own efforts, can perceive the grace of God. He continues in his old, blind dead Adam nature. He does not rise to behold the light; he prefers to sound his own praises. Isaiah exalts the people of wealthy Arabia because they are true Christians who proclaim only the praises of Jehovah, taught to do so undoubtedly by the light of grace and the Gospel.

