

text: "Their soul shall be as a watered garden."
(Jeremiah 31:12)

3. Introduction

1. The first act in the drama of ~~the~~ divine revelation opens in a garden; and the first person that appears on the scene is our ancestor, Adam the gardner. The story runs -- "The Lord God plantéd a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food;" (Gen. 2:8,9).

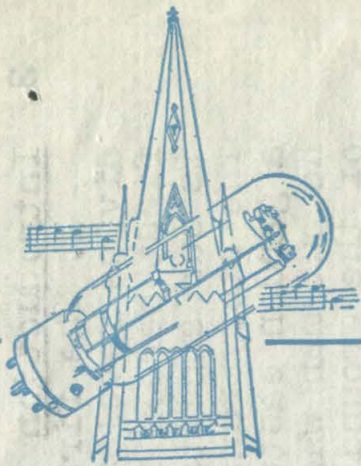
2. The expression "making a garden" is an expressive one, and a suggestive one. We did not make the forest or the meadow; they were made for us; but we make a garden. Into the making of it there goes something of our own labor and skill. But we cannot make a garden alone. Except God make the garden, those who labor in it labor uselessly. It is the same in the spiritual realm. In the cultivation of the garden of the soul we need the help of God. Any success attained will be the result of the joint labor of God and man.

3. In the cultivation of a garden certain things are necessary.

I. Necessary to a garden, especially to the Oriental mind the first thing necessary, is water. Without water there could be no garden; with sufficiency of water the desert could be reclaimed and be made to blossom as the rose.

Speaking to those to whom spiritual prosperity was promised, the prophet says in our text, "Their soul shall be as a watered garden."

If rain and dew fail to descend upon a garden, then we must get our supply from other sources and help God out by doing the watering with our own hands, through



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devices such as buckets and hoes, carrying the water to the garden.

Oliver Wendal Holmes remarks: "There is in the garden of my soul a little plant called reverence, which I find needs to be watered once a week." That plant of reverence needs to be watered more often than that, but at such an interval it needs a special watering; and the Sabbath was made for man to give him the time and the opportunity to attend to that particular duty.

Whenever the water of life, the presence of Christ, the grace of God, falls upon our thirsty souls, we are revived. Every thing that this water touches lives.

"I think of the garden after the rain
And hope to my heart comes singing again."

For every separate soul, God provides water of life, refreshing and reviving grace. That soul must be planted so this water can promote growth.

II. Next in importance to an adequate supply of water is the proper fertilization and cultivation of the soil. The ground that has been broken up and pulverized and manured has to be stirred up frequently so as to prevent the tender plant from becoming earthbound, and also to bring to the surface the elements of nutrition hidden in the soil. The stones also must be gathered out lest they press down upon the tender shoots and keep them from springing into the sunshine. Above all, the weeds must be rooted out before they overshadow and choke the tender plants.

In the same way, our utmost attention must be given to everything that would tend to promote or hinder the development of the Christian graces growing within the garden of the soul.

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Conclusion

1. The care of his personal soul is man's first concern.

2. It is by no means his only concern, however, nor his main one. No man should seek the ultimate end or purpose of life in himself. He should seek to make the most of himself so as to increase his value to society.

3. He should seek enrichment of self in order to attain enrichment of service.

4. But he must begin with self, for improved social service can come only from improved personality; and nothing but the most bitter regret will come at the end of the day to anyone who has made public service of any kind the occasion for neglect of his own soul's culture.

5. In John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" the story was given of a pilgrim who set out from the City of Destruction for the City of Life. Lately men have begun thinking that Bunyan was a selfish man, because he made the salvation of his own soul his chief end in life, and set out all by himself, even leaving his own family in the City of Destruction. But John Bunyan is eternally right. A man who has not himself started for the City of Life will never start others in that direction.

6. Thus, it is our duty to care for our souls, that when the water of God's grace comes it may be cultivated and fertilized and ready for growth in Christian grace, in the ways of salvation.

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