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# Weekly Discourse;

CONTAINING

## SPIRITUAL SERMONS

BY THE GUIDES OF

# Mrs. Cora L. V. Richmond.



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# THE MARVELOUS ROAD THAT LED TO ROME.

BY AN ANCIENT PRIEST.

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DELIVERED AT CHICAGO, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1887.

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## INVOCATION.

Infinite Parent; all wise and Eternal God; Thou Truth Divine: in Whose light there is no error; Thou Love Divine, in Whose tenderness there is no hatred; Thou Who art knowledge and wisdom supreme: unto Thee from the shadow of earth's error Thy children turn; from human hatred they turn unto Thee, source of all love, and from the shadow and feebleness of the human senses they would turn unto the light of the soul, to that innermost shrine that is with Thee. O God, they would praise Thee, not in temples fashioned by human hands, upbuilt by art's power, but within the human spirit where Thou hast made the altar and shrine, they would bend in praise, praise Thee for the infinite splendor of Thy light, praise Thee for the majesty of Thy law. Thine is the temple whose starry dome illumines the earth through the wonder of Thy law; Thine the temple whose form is nature, whereunto man may turn, not finding Thee, but finding Thy creation; and Thine the sacred altar within, where Thy voice speaketh in silence unto man and where Thy word is made manifest. O God, they would praise Thee for the visible universe, for that order, harmony, and majesty with which suns and systems move responsive to Thy law. They would praise Thee for the fragrance of the lily, from whose cup the nectar is distilled whence the winged bee and the butterfly can upbuild the structure and fine filament of wings: they praise Thee for every smallest fiber, for every root, and tree, and blade of grass syllables the law and harmony of Thy creation: they praise Thee for the physical life of man, unto which the earth responds with the ever teeming freshness of the verdure, flowers, and fragrance of springtime, and the glory of the

harvest. They praise Thee for the abundance of all things in nature, but when man turns unto nature he turns unto the dust; we praise Thee that beyond the dust, above the law of nature, Thy divine law transfigures him and places him within the temple of the spirit, and holds communion there with him, and makes him one with Thee; that when sorrow oppresses and nature is voiceless Thy Spirit giveth comfort, Thy ministering angels attend. O God, may every one in sorrow turn to Thee; may they turn to Thee when in doubt, knowing that with Thee there is certainty and truth; may they turn to Thee when in the feebleness of the senses and know that Thy Spirit is all light. With that quenchless flame of immortality may every shadow of earthly life be dispersed, until all shall learn to praise Thee in spirit and in truth. Amen.

#### DISCOURSE.

“There is but one God and He ruleth over all.”

There was but one city, and that city was Rome. Every road led unto the “Eternal City”; and in the height of the Empire, antecedent to the advent of Christianity, every civilized country of the world contributed to her power; she was empress of the world. Under Augustus, who might be named the first emperor of Rome, all nations paid tribute to her empire.

Egypt was robbed of her ancient glory: the Orient turned its tide westward, and the whole earth was made subservient unto Rome. Under its dominion all possible structures of art, all wondrous highways were constructed, rivers were spanned or turned from their courses, seas were crossed, and every nation of the earth accessible to her armies yielded their tributes unto Rome; two millions of people became the servants of an individual man, and beneath the line of emperors that followed the power of that tyranny, the strength of that greatness, was included.

Within that rule another voice was heard: the voice of the people, it had assumed the form of that wonderful law, that with its twelve tablets finally became the foundation of the laws of the world. These tablets, constructed by the chosen ten, (the Decemviri) were such as were borrowed from the Greek law-makers, and in their nature constituted the foundation of the Roman government. There was a time when the people ruled, when the people fashioned the government, when the laws were concentrated in them; these were overthrown and were followed by a succession of emperors until the advent of the Christian era.

When Constantine turned the tide of state in favor of the Christian Church and when under some of the first emperors of the Christian era, it seems now it was Phocas, popes were made the rulers of Rome: then there was but one road in all the world, that led to the vatican. The concentration of power of priest and king in one potentate, united the authority of religion and the authority of state. The people were denied, the patricians were denied; no other authority reigned, no one however high.

The Empire of Rome had past, an interval had ensued, another thousand years had begun. During the thousand years that the church has reigned there are those

who believed it represented the vicegerency of heaven believed it was the power of heaven, no other but the one speaking to you believed that it was the "Prince of the world," possibly that power that is mentioned in the Book of Revelation as governing for a thousand years. But it is also true that within the realm of those who governed under the papal power certain marvelous things were performed: kings were obedient to Pope Alexander the III of Rome, who amused himself by subjecting them to discipline by commanding them to hold the reins of his horse when he mounted, and to do other menial offices for him as a higher prince, higher authority than any which the earth could give; it was also under the reign of some of the popes that every emperor in Europe was compelled to pay a pilgrimage unto Rome, not only to make confession of all earthly sins, but to receive every possible sanction from the papal authority to continue the earthly possession of that which was theirs. What the Empire was under Augustus' authority, under the mandate of this papal power, Rome became with a more subtle and secret meaning; and this authority, though not so extensive and magnificent in an earthly sense, was, nevertheless, much more fruitful of the tributes that mankind bring to authority than the most splendid empire that had preceded it.

What followed? There is a history which possibly some of you may know but it is immured in the secrets of the vatican.

One king commenced his pilgrimage to Rome under the authority of a priest that he might be shriven of his sins, and that he might pay tribute of a portion of his possessions to the pope, that he might contribute to the Holy See some portion of his earthly treasures and receive in return the heavenly kingdom. The priest was sincere and took charge of the spiritual welfare of this king, giving him advice and company on his journey. Ever and anon as they journeyed, sometimes by foot and sometimes by horse, the king would say: "How far is it now, oh priest unto Rome?" The priest would forever answer in the same voice: "As far as repentance is from thee; oh king." For the king while acknowledging the temporal power of the church and the authority of the pope, was not repentant in spirit, had learned none of the lessons of self-sacrifice, which the church enjoined upon all, until they were within the pale of its sacrament, when once there this same power of selfishness may prevail, then man is shriven by another and higher authority in the church. The king was unrepentant in spirit, but went to pay tribute to the pope as an emperor of Rome, as a king to a conquering king, but he did not go in the spirit of repentance.

As they journeyed on whenever by the wayside there would be children in need, or some one who was weary and worn, the king would dismount and insist upon succoring those who were in distress. The priest, keeping his own counsel, meanwhile, left the king to follow the bent of his generous impulses. Then again he would burst forth saying: "How far oh priest is it unto Rome?" "As far as repentance is from thee, oh king."

Through many mountain places they journeyed, through deep ravines and gorges, and by perilous passes. They came one night, just as the bells were sounding for prayers, to a small hamlet in one of the provinces of this king: the

people gathered unto their accustomed place of prayer before they retired for the night: the king, disguised in lowly raiment, and the priest, attired after the manner of his kind, entered the place and knelt with the multitude, receiving the blessing and ministrations of their priest: then the king sought for a place of refuge, but there could none be found that could accommodate them excepting the residence of the priest who had blessed the multitude. As they received his hospitality, the priestly robes of the one accompanying the king being sufficient to gain admittance, the king asked the presiding priest of the parish the condition of the people there; were they very poor, had they much promise, were there much upon which they could thrive? Finding from the father that the poor were very poor, there were no rich among them, excepting those many miles distant upon a lordly estate, the king ordered that a certain portion of the treasures that he had brought should be distributed among the poor: he gave this in keeping of the priest and journeyed on his way. On another occasion he came to where the post was commanded by one of his servants, the ruler of the military power; under the dominion of this military officer the people were subjected to many grievous wrongs. For instance: in a military encampment where there must be certain commissary stores, instead of drawing from the store provided by the king, he drew from the store of the country, saying that the country was expected to pay tribute to the king's armies. The king was enraged at this violence and ordered that this military servant be dismissed and his place supplied with one more humane who would follow the rules and laws which the king had given.

At every nightfall when the king would ask: How far is it to Rome? the priest would answer in the same words "as far as repentance is from thee," until at last the vision of the Celestial City dawned upon the sight of the king; he saw the domes; he saw the minarets and towers; he saw in the beauty of the twilight the wonderful picture as approaching from the mountains they viewed it far away. Then he no longer asked the distance but silently turned away to the small tent provided for their lodging, and communed with himself thus: as far as repentance is from thee, O king; of what shall I repent; of my empire? it has been bequeathed to me; my rule? I strive to make it just; of my lack of faith in spiritual things? I have not known of them, they have only come to me by word of priest or instructor. I will ask the holy father wherein consists repentance; what is the wrong of which I am accused.

The priest and the king gained admittance to the presence of the holy father. There the king observed that there were not the severities practiced that he had supposed; they were invited to the hall where the priests were sitting at their accustomed table, he observed many luxuries that he thought were not in keeping with their severe mode of life; he was admitted to many secret places because of the influence of the priest who accompanied him. When the king was alone with the pope he said: "Tell me, holy father, what is the difference between the selfishness of those who are consecrated unto God and the selfishness of those who are unconsecrated?" And for these words, you may take the assurance of one in immortal life, that the king was beheaded. He never returned to the people who watched for his coming; the poor whom he had striven to uplift, those whom he had benefitted in the provinces which he had passed through he never saw again; from Rome he never passed. Convocations of bishops and priests assembled and endeavored to convince him of his worldliness; the pope endeavored to convince him of his lack of repentance, but he had seen that repentance did not mean the abrogation of selfish desires which were

veiled in the atmosphere of this eternal city, that the power of the Church was the power that controlled the monarchies of the world for its own temporal uplifting; and thus the king passed into the other state not fashioned by man, not builded by governments, not created by empires, nor yet created by any emperor save the Prince of Peace, and was received among those who are the inheritors of righteousness.

The priest who had accompanied him on the journey to Rome was thus left to mourn the loss of a personal friend whom he had come to love; left to learn the lesson that within the imperial power of Rome nothing meant repentance save to give unto the church body and soul. The body could be given to the service of God if the soul were so consecrated. But what was this power that came between man and God with such temporal majesty, such awe inspiring presence, such force of arms, as to make even kings bend beneath its might; yet not conquering their spirits? And the priest struggling to solve this problem, and with his grief at the loss of his personal friend, also died, pining from the earth he entered the spirit state for love of his friend. From that moment the eyes of both were unsealed and they saw the mighty ægis that brooded over the world: they beheld the pinions of the shadow which under the name of light encompassed mankind.

Whatever may be the name of that power which, in individual hearts, leads man to worship God and Christ in loving deeds, thousands and thousands of novitiates, thousands and thousands of priests, can testify; but whatever that power is that seizes hold upon the human conscience, that makes it serve whether willing or not and bends everything to its subjection, that was the power of Rome beneath the popes. However many godly lives are included in the past record of the Roman Catholic Church its foundation is on earth not in the skies.

Between God and man there is one voice, and that is the voice of Christ, the voice of conscience. Between God and man, as interpreted by church and popes, there is one voice and that is the voice of the church; its authority is man's conscience. Has it a right to that authority: can it bend man's conscience to its bidding lawfully? The church says yes, that popes are the vicegerents of God. Who made them so? Six hundred years after Jesus walked the earth a king announced the power of the popes, and is this the vicegerency of the skies? Two hundred years after the advent of Christianity a king accepted the Christian religion and to make it authentic founded Byzantium as Constantinople, made lawful the authority of the church because of the translation of the scriptures, this constituted the authority of the church, and under another king the authority of the popes. Without disputing those who accept it; without in any way discussing that which constitutes the basis of its position and action, the one who addresses you will say that human authority, by whatever appointment, cannot rest between man and God; that the standards of church authority, as set up in the Church of Rome, and feebly imitated by the Protestant Church, are standards for which there is no divine claim; that if Jesus is the one and the only power between man and God, representing the divine spirit of that love which was given for all, then the church cannot be authority, only Jesus; there must be within man's spirit that which will enable him to perceive that authority or he cannot possess it.

The authority of the Church of Rome is upheld by every means; the human senses are put to the test: human thoughts are captivated; human imagination is appealed to; the love of music, art, poetry, all things whatsoever are made subservient to its use; under its imperial authority the divinest masters were

obliged to bend and yield their choicest treasures to the church; under its mandate the genius of Michael Angelo was commanded to build St. Peters; under its mandate the soft and fair pictures of the Madonnas were painted by Raphael; the earth itself was obliged to bow, not to Christ in heaven but, to man upon the earth.

The history of the Church of Rome is, if read aright, that which deprives man of any individual choice, of any individual exercise of conscience; the constituted authority of the church must interpret for him the Word of God and the word of human action: he must simply obey, obey willingly if he can, but obey willingly or not. The Protestant Church simply protested against Rome, but in its turn set up an authority over the human conscience which was not only more absurd but very futile, since it could not employ the various means possessed by the Romish Church to govern the action of the human conscience; fashioning creeds without the authority to enforce them, having sacred offices without those offices being recognized, it was no wonder that under the Protestant Church there were dissensions, and that those dissensions spread far and wide until they covered the area of Protestant Christendom.

From the time of the established power of the popes until the proclamation of the freedom of Italy, in 1871, was such a rule as the world of temporal and spiritual power has never seen. Without any bitterness; without other than the greatest tenderness for the individual lives enrolled in that history, the one who addresses you, considers that it represents the greatest illustration of the power of darkness that the world as ever seen. And when under the sword of liberty, under the impetus of patriotism, the people, rebelling against papal authority found it possible, after eleven hundred years of empire, to overthrow the temporal power of the pope, it was such a marvel as human history has never witnessed. Believe me it was no human hand, no human power that could accomplish it under the name of liberty,—that name is as much abused by those who use it as the name of religion—but the name of liberty in this instance had the power of the Spirit for its foundation. The Italian patriots and their friends throughout the world saw that the day and hour had come, that the temporal power of Rome must be in the possession of the people, and after a time the papal father was permitted to retain his holy office in matters of religion merely.

Does Rome rest there? Does the sevenfold city with its seven glowing hills represent all that there is to the end of this chapter? Do the threefold powers of human history enshrined in ancient Rome, in medieval Rome, in modern Rome, represent the entire history of the Church? Or is it true that the Holy See contemplates such temporal association and alliance with other powers as shall enable it to look forward to the restoration of its temporal power? Is that temporal power to be in Rome, or is it to be elsewhere? After three hundred years of conflict with the Church, Germany strives to negotiate amicably with the pope in Rome. After three hundred years of such bloodshed and slaughter as the world has never known between two contending powers the Church of Rome and Protestant England, will the latter outrage her Protestant record with a temporary alliance with the pope? After many years the seeds that are sown in a distant land yield their fruitage. The sword of Mazzini, of Garibaldi and the Italian patriots may have driven the blow that destroyed the constituted power of papal authority in Rome, but is it true that it is destroyed over all the world?

As one who has passed through the history of this authority, as one who knows its influence on human life, who must forever separate the religion of his heart while in Rome from the authority of the Church of Rome, the one who

addresses you bids you to be vigilant; to see to it that under no pretense is there introduced into the government of your land of liberty that which shall represent what is called religious authority. Let freedom of conscience remain free, for the moment there is placed a restriction upon the human conscience by human authority and that is sustained by the law of the land, that moment Rome is at your doors. See to it that your children who are growing up are the true inheritors of this fair lily of lands that extends from ocean to ocean, almost unto either pole and represents the hopes of the world. It was toward this land that the Italian patriots looked in their struggle for freedom. It is toward this land now that many nations look who are imperiled. Even Ireland across the sea looks toward this land, more than to Rome, for that peace that shall give her strength for Freedom's sake. See to it that there is not insinuated into any form of local government that which can be interpreted to mean a power between you and God.

Let your moral training be such that each child shall know him or herself to be accountable only unto heaven for his or her action; for it is by human interpretation, by this voice of intervention between God that man has usurped the right of dictation, and the consciences of men have become perverted.

If Mammon must rule; if the power of the world must govern let it not wear the garb of heaven; let Satan no longer be clothed in the habiliments of the skies: let human ambition rise and fall upon its own merits; but let there be no other voice between you and God than the voice of conscience enlightened by freedom, instructed by Justice, and having power, and fervor, and love for humanity. So shall the power of Rome be robbed of its ability to harm mankind, and the only sacred city be that which descends from the skies, the New Jerusalem unto the hearts and lives of man, the Celestial City crowned with light, the result of human action and human righteousness complete, and fair, and beautiful, and perfect in every land beneath the sun.

#### THE NEW JERUSALEM.

[IMPROMPTU POEM; THE SUBJECT BEING SUGGESTED BY THE AUDIENCE.]

The sacred city builded on earth  
 To which the ancient Hebrews came,  
 Had destruction in its birth,  
 Was built again in the King's blest name:  
 Around and over the temple rare  
 Were inscribed the mystic symbols old,  
 Wonderful, worshipful, and there  
 The names that in Egypt once were told.

Yet even *that* Jerusalem  
 Must perish by the hand of man;  
 And He whose lowly garment hem  
 No king would touch, in heaven's plan  
 Must meet the city of the skies  
 And show mankind His paradise.



In the vision, therefore, John beheld  
 The wondrous city, as a bride;  
 Descending from the heavens above  
 Dwelling within man's soul, beside  
 Which all the cities of earth  
 Could never dream of its glorious worth.

The corner stones were jewels bright,  
 Sacred walls builded of the truths  
 That in Heaven as a central light  
 Reveal themselves; 'neath man's abuse—  
 This vision misinterpreted  
 Seems as a city of earth instead.

But what are the precious stones but light?  
 The pure white light of the diamond's ray  
 Is symbol of God's glories white,  
 The alabaster throne away,  
 As purity and perfect Love  
 Enshrined within the throne above.

And what is the topaz but the ray  
 Of healing power of God's own hand?  
 Imaging but the light of day,  
 That broken by life's dread command,  
 Reveals in truth and love its power,  
 The symbol of its celestial dower.

The chrysolite but the sparkling ray  
 Broken by life's shadow below;  
 And the pearls, as the gate to eternal day  
 Are like the tears that here must flow  
 In sympathy for human pain  
 To bring back the sacred city again.

See all the city walls that rise;  
 The gates of pearl, the streets of gold,  
 Are visions but to symbolize  
 The wealth of spirit all untold.

But the real and true Jerusalem,  
 The power that leads man unto the light,  
 Is that which speaketh unto them,  
 Most lowly within the earthly night,  
 And by the power of truth alone  
 Wins man to the Heavenly throne.

Yes, the sacred city shall come down,  
 Earth's habitations shall be blest,  
 Man shall be crowned with the heavenly crown  
 When, obedient to heaven's behest  
 He builds the city of the skies  
 Of truths that reign in paradise.

#### *BENEDICTION.*

Celestial Light; descend upon the earth,  
 Make here Thy habitation in each heart,  
 Reveal Thy angels of celestial worth,  
 And strength, and truth, and love, for aye impart,  
 Until mankind, beholding all Thy grace,  
 Shall in each line of light Thy being trace.

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