

"BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS AGE."

BY A. J. GORDON, D. D.

THAT is the word that most exactly represents the meaning. Jesus Christ came into this world, not to reconcile the age to us, but to make us to be estranged from the age; to become dissimilar from it at every point. Have you ever analyzed the singular statement in that *text*: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." He had a double crucifixion. Most of us would rejoice if we had a single one; and yet he rejoiced in a twofold crucifixion, which was very real in his own case. There are a great many persons who are dead to the world, while the world is alive to them. That is to say, they may, through sickness or the loss of some sense, be incapacitated for enjoying the world, yet the world is there; wealth, friends, social rank, a thousand things that allure them, and they are ready to go back to these if ever they should become alive again. There are others to whom the world is dead while they are alive. There are those who have lost property, or station, or friends, everything that goes to make life happy; but, so far as they are concerned, there are five hungry senses which cry out for the world if it should ever come back to them. Paul was both dead to the world and the world was dead to him. He had lost his standing as a Jew, and never expected to regain anything that belonged to that old condition; and, looking to the cross, he could say, "I have been crucified with Christ." So he was dead to the world, and the world was dead to him.

How victorious this made him! I have been struck in observing the various attempts to explain a certain phrase that Paul uses: "In all these things we are more than conquerors." Yet how simple it is when taken in this connection. He sums up all the things he is enduring, the sword, peril, nakedness, dying all the day long for Christ, led daily like a sheep to the slaughter. And then he says, "In all these things we are more than conquerors." How? Plainly thus: The man who is victorious through victory is a con-

queror; but he who is *victorious through defeat* is more than conqueror; and that was his case. So mark that other expression which our early translators seem not to have apprehended, or hardly dared to put into English. The Apostle thanks God—for what? His purpose was to bring back these Christians from Damascus, bound to his chariot, and to lead them into the city of Jerusalem like a Roman conqueror rejoicing over them as his slaves, and thus to have a triumphal entry. But instead of that the Lord met him, and he was chained to Messiah's chariot. So he says, "Thanks be to God who always *leadeth us in triumph*." His great joy was not only to be defeated, but to be led as a captive chained to Immanuel's chariot.

We are, therefore, to be not conformed to this age. But notice the other expression, "Be ye transfigured"—for that is what it really is. It is said of Christians, that they have "Tasted of the powers of the age to come." We are between two ages—the present age and the age to come. What is to be our relation to this age? We are to be in a constantly progressive non-conformity to it; and also to be like our Lord when he was transfigured, and for a moment carried over into the age to come. He was bathed in its glory. He was surrounded by its blessed companionships. He was taken out of this present evil age, from which He came to deliver us, and was carried into the age that is to be, the Millennial age, and so was transfigured. In other words, before He tasted the cup of His passion, He tasted for a little while "the powers of the age to come." And that is what the Lord would have us do, by entering into the life of the age to come. From our defeats, and sorrows, and trials, and heart-breakings here,

Toward the sky future turn,
And from Hope's unseen tomorrow,
Fill today's exhausted urn.

An incident has been told which interested me very much. A shipload of cattle recently arrived on the New England coast, after a long and stormy voyage. When they came within fifty miles of New England, these poor storm-tossed animals began to scent the clover, and to show signs of exceeding joy and delight. They

began to taste the powers of a new world. This is what the Apostle would have us do—now and then to smell the clover of those sweet fields, arrayed in living green, beyond the flood. We are to be not conformed to this age, but we are to look into the age that is to be, so that we may be exulting, and victorious, and strong. It is death and life—dead to the present, and living in the life that is to be.