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THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

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THE Apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy,* after affording him certain instructions in relation to his course at Ephesus, thus concludes:—"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God." Having said thus much, his mind, as guided by the Spirit of Inspiration, according to its own bent, and after a manner which often appears in his writings, turned instantly to that "glorious Gospel of Christ," of which he was never ashamed; and he proceeded to write further:—"The pillar and ground of the truth; and, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness." Truly it is a glorious paragraph, of which these words are the initiative and description, full of meaning, and as sublime as it is beautiful. It may be that these are the clauses of an early Christian creed;—a good confession of evangelic history and truth;—short, compact, yet containing the faith once delivered to the saints;—simple, yet comprehensive in its avow-

als;—which infancy was taught to lisp,—which age revered,—which was held up to the world,—and which was avowed with unbleached courage at the cross or the stake!

Or, and not altogether inconsistently with this view, its parallelisms and measured periods may mark it out as an early Christian hymn;—one of those which the first believers were wont to raise to Christ as God;—a canticle which gladdened their hearts—soothed their troubles—and raised their hopes;—a precious avowal of their faith and their confidence;—often sung in their prisons, when they would not accept of deliverance by the denial of the Lord that bought them.

"God:—

Manifest in the flesh;
Justified in the Spirit;
Seen of angels;
Preached among the Gentiles;
Believed on in the world;
Received up into glory."

Whether a creed or hymn, or a brief confession in verse, to be sung by ancient piety, it is a most worthy stanza! Let it be our song in the house of our pilgrimage. May our dying lips echo its notes of joy and triumph!

* 1 Tim. iii. 15, 16.