

The Book of Life.

BY REV. ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D. D.

"I will not blot out His name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess His name before My Father, and before His angels." Rev. 3:1.

This is only a portion of the three-fold promise to the victors in the Church in Sardis. Its former part is, "He shall be clothed in white raiment, and shall not have any more sorrow." The latter part is, "The Church is described as being one that had a name to lie, and was dead." That it was not wholly dead, the fact that it was reprobated with, and rebuked, shows that it was still a living entity.

To such a Church, in which there were but a few names that had not defiled their garments, the promise is made with special emphasis, "I will not blot out His name out of the Book of Life." The representation is, of course, highly figurative, but the truths that gleam through the veil of symbol are plain and weighty enough.

First, then, the Book. There is a great deal in the Apocalypse about this book of the living, or "of life." And, like the rest of its imagery, the symbol finally reposes upon the Old Testament cycle of metaphor. Moses, in his noble self-sacrifice, was willing "to be blotted out of Thy Book" as an atonement for the sins of the nation.

Secondly, note the inscription of the names. Now there are two passages in this Book of Revelation which seem to say that the names are written "before the foundation of the world." I am not going to plunge into discussions far beyond our reach, but I may remind you that such a statement says nothing about the inscription of the names, which is not true about all events in time.

So, leaving that ideal and eternal inscription of the names in the obscurity which cannot be dispelled, we shall be more usefully employed in asking what, so far as concerns us, are the conditions on which we may become possessors of that Divine life from Jesus Christ, and citizens of the heavens? You cannot get and take the Book out of the hand of Him that sitteth upon the throne.

For, brethren, union with God is life; separation from God is death. If our eyes were not hidden by the fallacious appearance of time, we should know that the righteous dead are the living, and that the sinful living are the dead. For what is life, the life of a man? Is it the thing that he has in common with the beasts, and which he too often nourishes by killing his better and truer self? Is it the life of the lower intellect of affections, whilst all the highest parts of the man lie dormant?

should ever turn. Whether it is better to have a name written in heaven; or, of Jeremiah said, to have your name "written on the earth." Children write their names on the sands, and the next tide smooths them all away.

Again, let me remind you that to be written in that Book implies being the objects of divine grace and divine love. The King of the universe, who slumbers not nor sleeps, like the monarch in the Old Testament story, in the watches of earth's night, has the records of the kingdom spread before Him, and there His eye rests on the names of the humble men who have loved Him and done His throne and His kingdom some poor service.

Remember that no past religious experience or emotions avail for present need. Yesterday's breath will not fill our lungs, or freshen our blood to-day. We live by no inherent, but by a derivative life, and only by continual faith do we draw it from Jesus Christ.

So, dear brother, it matters very little where else our names may be written, if only we are on two or three faithful hearts which will presently cease to beat, and soon will only be carved on mouldering tombstones which may yet outlast the knowledge of who we were.

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Then, again, note how this symbol suggests to us that to be enrolled in the Book is to be citizen of heaven. The name being "written in heaven" implies that the true native soil of the man is where his name is written. He is inscribed on the register of the community to which he belongs. He lives in a far away colony, but he is a native of the metropolis. And, just as Joseph went from the remote and semi-Pagan Galilee to be enrolled in the city of David, because he was of royal lineage, so we, if we belong to the King, and have His life-blood in our veins, will have our citizenship in the heavens. Where He is, in the capital, is our native place.

Therefore, my friend, if you call yourself a Christian, remember to what community you belong by all your affinities, and where your heart's desires and hopes should ever turn.

Emotional Life of Jesus. He who is at once our Saviour and our Pattern is set before us in the gospels as the embodiment of all strong and tender feeling—strong, and at the same time tender. To a superficial reader He may seem so incapable of being bowed or broken by emotion as even to appear unmoved. It may be supposed that He knew nothing of those storms of feeling, those raptures or agonies, those agitations and distractions which have affected the most of us at those times which memory notes as the epochs of our lives.

But here is a mistake. The apparent calmness of Christ is not the cold and unfeeling serenity of a phlegmatic and undisturbed by any fiercest storm; it was rather a mighty steadiness, as of a stream so full, so strong, so tense, so constant, as to seem, as it were, rigid in its even flow. It is the steadiness of a "power of feeling" in the great life of Jesus were to use an insufficient phrase. The forces of His emotion were like the strong, steady throbbing of the engines in a great steamer, and beneath them was a consuming fire, as if the glowing furnace were far down in the hold below.

When He was moved, as so often, by compassion, it was a sympathy indeed; it was literally a fellowship in suffering; it was sympathy so perfect that it could be said with exact precision: "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases." Temptations racked His soul until He called upon the Father "with strong crying and tears." At times, on account of the hypocrisy and meanness of His opponents, He was as powerfully stirred by indignation as at other times by pity, and His whole being seemed converted into an awful passion.

These are a few of the intimations given us respecting the emotional life of our Lord. If we remember that the One who might appear to the careless eye as impassive and immovable as a giant oak whose fibres have been hardened and stiffened by ten thousand storms, but who, upon better knowledge, proves to be as sensitive as the reed, and as pliant as the slender spire that sways at every breath.

Such is the Being whom we adore as our Saviour and follow as our Master. How could it be otherwise than as James has said, that "He dwelt in us in the heart of humanity, and brought love up from deeper levels than it had sprung from before."—The Rev. W. A. Keece, in The Watchman.

Incidents of a Revival. I wrote to seven of the principal men of the village separate letters requesting that they meet me on a certain evening, at a certain place, to talk upon the subject of religion. I had, however, as my own religious experience, expressed my great desire that they all might know the joy of forgiven sin, and prayed with them. All were converted, the last one five weeks and one day after the letters were sent.

First demonstration made Oct. 31st, when the postmaster of the village, after a talk founded upon a part of the first chapter of Proverbs, and the invitation given to those who would accept of offers of mercy, immediately, rose from his seat, walked across the room, and, in a meeting was being held, and, taking me by the hand, said, "I cannot live another hour without confessing my sins and asking for pardon," and kneeling on the floor he did both. Others rose in different parts of the room, and at least six, most of them men, found Christ that night.

At this meeting an elderly woman made the complete surrender. The next evening when the request was made that each should silently pray for the one sitting next to him, a man, who had been praying for the conversion of her son, a thoughtless, busy man of twenty-two. Before the meeting closed, he rose in his place, and, asking for the prayers of God's people, said, "I cannot go away without having Christ with me. When he went away Christ was with him."

One day I visited the wife of one of the men who had been converted. She was barely courteous, and her opposition to considering the subject of religion was unmistakable. Prayer was offered, during which she knelt. I left the house with great desire for that woman's salvation, and went to the home of a poor Scotch widow, and her crippled Christian son. The story of the last hour was slowly told, and then the Bible laid upon a chair open to that passage: "Again say unto you, that if two of you shall agree as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven." All prayed, claiming in faith the fulfilment of the promise. That night the woman arose, and, kneeling, said, "I have given my heart to God, and at the same time the service was presented to her husband, opposition all gone out of her heart and Christ came in. Tears of joy were in many eyes.

The Enterprise of the Devil. There are two things that cannot be said about the arch enemy of mankind: it is illiberal, it is indolent; we cannot say he is illiberal. Whomsoever the ultimate diabolical end may be, how desperate or how destructive, one thing must be admitted: the devil is most enterprising in accomplishing that end.

The professing Christian may be prudent in his expenditures looking to the conversion of the world; the church itself may be very conservative in using such appliances as may attract the curious worldling to the fold of Christ; but, depend upon it, the devil is very bold in his expenditures, very bold in his enterprises, and generous to a fault. His emissaries are incultured with the same enterprising spirit. They offer every inducement to lure men, women, and children into the broad road that leadeth to destruction.

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A young woman came to me one Sabbath saying she wanted to ask my forgiveness. I asked her for what. She said she had told me a falsehood. You asked me one week ago if I thought I was a Christian. I said yes, feeling what you might say if I said no. The thought of that sin so troubled me that I could find no rest but in God's forgiveness, which I have.

I went to see a woman who met me at the door in apparent great distress of mind. She said she had been a Christian eighteen years, but her husband had bitterly opposed her in her religious life all this time. I told her to have faith in God as an answer of prayer. She said she had been praying for that one thing all day. That night her husband, who did not attend the public services, was convicted of sin in his home upon his bed, and he could not sleep. He was in an agony, and only found peace in asking his wife to pray for him, and asking God to have mercy on his poor, misguided, wicked self. The next morning heaven's light shone into that home.

At one of the meetings six girls rose for prayers. Each exhibited unusual emotion and a deep penitence and bowing before God; all found pardon. At one of the services they fell upon their faithful Sunday school teacher's neck in a transport of joy.

One man, nearly forty years of age, had been under conviction for some time, but confined to his home by a severe illness. One day his pastor, after consultation with his own minister of business, rose to go, stopped a moment at the door, went back, went to the door again, went back a second time, and could only say in his depth of feeling: "John, we cannot see the way about your all-important thing." That night the man awakened his wife to tell her of a great distress on account of his sins. She confessed to having the same feeling. A mother in Israel, living in the house, was called to the room. The prayer of faith from the Christian and generous to a fault, penitence from anxious and willing hearts was offered, and the next morning found the husband and wife on the way to the heavenly land.—Rev. H. L. Reade, Jewett City, Ct.

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