

ed great indignation; but without any knowledge of the facts we are safe in asserting that Roman Catholics in Honan or elsewhere are not proselytizers. Converts to the Catholic Church, except where she stretches forth her hand to the heathen, come to her bosom voluntarily, and only after they have received proper instruction."

The *Register* frankly acknowledges that, "it is without any knowledge of the facts." This is unfortunate. We should have expected that the experience of the editor would have taught him the importance of a knowledge of his facts before writing upon a subject. We propose to make him acquainted with the facts in the case, a service which we have no doubt the courteous editor of the *Register* will welcome.

In the first place the Missionary Board of the Presbyterian Church does not feel "very indignant" at the action of certain Roman Catholic priests in Honan. It is certainly grieved and disappointed at their action, but not "very indignant." Again the matter was not up for consideration at the meeting of the Board which has been held since the news referred to reached it. The *Register* has been misinformed.

Now as to the assertion it makes that "Roman Catholics in Honan or elsewhere are not proselytizers." We shall acquaint it with some facts and leave it to judge for itself, and for others to judge, if its assertion can be maintained with respect to Roman Catholics in Honan at least, that they "are not proselytizers," whatever may be their conduct elsewhere. Presbyterian missionaries have been at work for some years now in Honan, and have bravely and patiently overcome many dangers and much opposition, and at length having won the confidence of the people, have baptized some converts and attracted to themselves many enquirers. Honan has a population of several millions of Chinese, disciples of Confucius and idolaters. We should have no right to object to the priests of Rome going among these Chinese and endeavouring to Christianize them according to their idea. But instead of doing this, and without waiting for these enquirers in our mission to go "voluntarily to the bosom of Rome," her priests have come to them. What object could they have in passing by the heathen Chinese and going amongst the enquirers at a Presbyterian mission, if it was not to proselytize? They did proselytize and very successfully too we admit.

In dealing with the heathen our missionaries in common with Protestant missionaries, so far as we know without exception, have been exceedingly careful to offer no pecuniary or selfish personal considerations of any kind whatsoever to induce the people to forsake their old faith and adopt a new. With regard to the Roman Catholic priests, the facts are that, to these enquirers after light and truth at the Presbyterian Mission in Honan, they have offered, not simply the gospel, the truth about the way of salvation, and nothing more. Passing by the "heathen," to whom the *Register* says the Church of Rome "stretches out her hand," her priests (Italians) offered to guard these enquirers from persecution, because as they assured them, Protestants had no consuls or ambassadors in China who could protect them; offered free board to those who would come to them to study the doctrine, free education for their children, financial aid, and employment as far as possible, and other such like inducements. These are the facts. If this is not proselytizing, will the *Register* be good enough to tell us what to call it? In the face of these facts will the *Register* still maintain that "Roman Catholics in Honan or elsewhere are not proselytizers."

We at once admit, all Protestants do, the liberty and right to Roman Catholics which we claim for ourselves, to go anywhere and proclaim and teach what we consider to be the truth on the most important of all subjects; but as there is a tacit understanding among Protestant bodies not to interfere with each other's work in heathen lands so it might be expected that where there are millions of heathen to whom they could go, Roman Catholic missionaries would prefer to go to them rather than to enquirers in a Presbyterian mission. This, however, they have not done, and the *Register* would have us believe that in this there was no desire to proselytize. We confess this is difficult.

In continuation, in its article, the *Register* applies to Presbyterians, because of our French Evangelization work, the "Tu quoque" argument, and seeks to cast upon our work the stigma, which apparently considers peculiarly odious, of proselytizing. For our part we cannot see it to be so odious a thing to try in a legitimate way to bring to the right our

French Roman Catholic fellow-citizens whom we believe to be in the wrong, just as the priests and bishops of Rome in England, are trying to bring into the right way those Protestants whom they now believe to be in the wrong. To our respected contemporary we would submit that, it is scarcely just or truthful, when in our college in Montreal we make public provision for instructing French students who may choose to attend it; when we openly offer our Pointe-aux-Trembles schools to all comers who are willing to accept the well-known conditions, when we publicly establish churches and throw open their doors to all who of their own accord desire to attend them, when we freely offer scriptures for sale to all who choose to buy; it is, we repeat, scarcely just or truthful to say of such a mode of working that, "the French Canadian Mission keeps slinking along in the obscure path of proselytization."

Books and Magazines.

THE MIND OF THE MASTER.*

STRICTURES BY PRINCIPAL MACVICAR, D.D., LL.D.

In the quietness of this quaint old city of Chester I have just finished reading Dr. Watson's new volume, "The Mind of the Master." The fact that it is from the pen of the author of "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush" is sufficient to secure it a wide circulation. It has already caused considerable stir in Britain, reminding one of the noise made by the publication of two books that are now seldom mentioned, Strauss' *Leben Jesu* and Renan's romance on the Life of Christ.

The style of Dr. Watson's volume is brilliant and fascinating, possessing the attraction of literary finish, although somewhat monotonously antithetical and eminently dogmatic. As to method, the book is laid out in fifteen chapters with epigrammatic headings, sufficiently general and varied to allow the writer to say any smart or mystical thing that comes to his mind. He thus discusses Jesus our Supreme Teacher, the development of truth, the sovereignty of character, ageless life, sin an act of self-will, the law of spiritual gravitation, etc., etc.

Logical consistency and the laws of induction are of little account with Dr. Watson. In prosecuting the grave inquiry which he undertakes, one would expect him to collect and calmly weigh all relevant facts before announcing sweeping generalizations. Correlation and scientific treatment of any subject demands this much. But instead of this, vital sources of authentic information are deliberately excluded. The Old Testament and the writings of the apostles are laid aside, and with the avowed purpose of putting special honour upon Christ we are asked to accept an arbitrary selection from the gospels, especially the Sermon on the Mount, as giving a full interpretation of his mind.

It is somewhat difficult to say with precision what degree of authority any of the sacred writers, or even Jesus Himself, possesses in the eyes of Dr. Watson. He observes studied vagueness on the subject of their knowledge and inspiration. Of Jesus he says (p. 27): "One notices in the face of the words that Jesus makes a most distinct and also a most guarded claim as the prophet of God. He does not assert that he has compassed the length and breadth of human knowledge. Vast domains were left untouched by Jesus, and any one who goes to our Master for instruction, say in science or philosophy, can only be disappointed."

This is a circuitous charge of ignorance against Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3) without specifying the extent. Indeed, it may be questioned whether Dr. Watson's estimate of the person and attainments of the Redeemer is much higher than that of the old Arians and Socinians, in spite of the praise which in certain forms he lavishes upon Him. Of the Old Testament it is said, "One part is less than Christian—that is abrogated and disappears—replaced by Jesus." We are not told what this less than Christian part is that disappeared, and readers must use their own discretion in deleting portions of the Hebrew Scriptures. Nor are they taught to reverence specially any part of the Word, for the writers of both Old and New Testament are classified along with the sages of antiquity and founders of false religions: "Every prophet of the first order has his own message and it crystallises into a favourite idea. With Moses the ruling idea was law; with Confucius, it was morality; with Buddha, it was Renunciation; with Mohammed, it was God; with Socrates, it was soul; with the Master, it was the kingdom of God." (p. 319.)

These, of course, are all "prophets of the first order." Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed and Socrates as well as Jesus. They are all placed in the same category as coordinate in the exercise of prophetic functions—a fact which sheds light upon Dr. Watson's view of inspiration. It may therefore be good and commendable to follow the teaching of any one of these prophets "of the first order." To do so, at any rate, cannot issue in ruin in this world or the next, for we are solemnly assured that "Doctrines of reprobation may have some slight support in passages, for instance, of the Old Testament and the Epistles, wrested for the most part from the context and general spirit of the writer, but they have none in the discourses of Jesus. They are ideas out of the line of Jesus' thought, branches tied on to the vine, withering and ready for the burning." (p. 31.)

What can be more reckless than this statement? To offer it as a fair exposition of the mind of the Master to

persons who can read His words for themselves in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew and elsewhere in the gospels, seems little short of audacious impertinence. It is this sort of shallow, flippant dogmatism in novels and quasi-theological books that does incalculable injury to the young and to unwary, easy-going people of all classes. They thus learn to read the Word of God, taking the same unwarrantable liberties with it, until its warnings and lessons cease to be of practical force and value to them. Definite doctrinal teaching becomes repulsive to them, and each one extemporizes his own creed. This is in line with the trend of Dr. Watson's thought. He seems to have a standing spite at creeds and confessions, and never loses a chance of making a thrust at them. One wonders how he ever subscribed the best of them, the Westminster Confession, and, still more, how he now manages honestly to keep to his subscription. Character is everything with him. It is far superior to theology. But he forgets that he cannot have a pure and strong character without truth, and without the acceptance of a definite creed. Character is the outcome of honest belief. What a man believes concerning God and Christ and the Holy Spirit, concerning the rewards and punishments of time and eternity goes to make up the warp and the woof of his character. A pure creed honestly held and acted upon is inseparable from a holy life; and a godless immoral creed sincerely lived out produces a character corresponding with its articles.

There is no finality, says our author, in theology. One age builds up doctrine and the next pulls it down. There are only "two departments in which the human mind can arrive at certainty; one is pure mathematics and the other is ethics" (p. 60). Having said this, with characteristic facility in contradicting himself, he tells us, on the same page, as if demonstrating the very opposite, the utter uncertainty of ethical deliverances, that in "one century a Christian is burned because he does not believe in mass, and in the next another is executed because he does."

The doctrines of sin and atonement are handled with the same disregard of Biblical facts and principles characteristic of many parts of the book. Our federal relation to Adam is denied. Our sinful state by nature is regarded as having no juridical connection with his primal transgression. On this point there is difference and conflict between Christ and Paul, but the Master's view is supreme. It was the Apostle and not Jesus who taught that "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." This is Pauline doctrine, but it was never sanctioned by the Redeemer. So we are told, "It is always a startling transition," says our author, "from the theologians to Jesus, and it gives one pause that the supreme Teacher of religion did not deliver Himself on original sin. But it is a fact, and Jesus had His reasons. For one thing, any insistence on heredity would have depreciated responsibility, and Jesus held every man to his own sin." (p. 93.) "With Jesus, from first to last sin is selfishness." (p. 98.) "Sin is a deliberate mischoice," the choice of the world instead of God. "Jesus also believed that sin was a mistake." (p. 97.)

But Dr. Watson fails to tell us that John said, "Sin is the transgression of the law," "He that committeth sin is of the devil" (1 John iii); and that Jesus said to the Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John viii. 44.)

Is it from these and many similar statements that Dr. Watson infers that "Jesus also believed that sin was a mistake?" Was His inspired apostle of the same mind when He said, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him?" (1 John iii. 15.) Is murder only a mistake?

Those who trifle with sin, and minimise and excuse its hatefulness and criminality before God are led by logical necessity to depreciate its God-given remedy. If sin is nothing but "selfishness" and "a mistake," then Christ's mission was simply to remove the selfishness and correct the mistake. This He did by His potent lessons and example, not by the shedding of His blood, or giving Himself a ransom for many. His death, it is true, confirmed and enforced His lessons; but was in no juridical sense an atonement or satisfaction to outraged justice. This is the Socinian view, and Dr. Watson's as well. He has produced nothing new in this respect. He says, "Jesus proposed to ransom the race, not by paying a price to the devil or to God, but by loosening the grip of sin on the heart and reinforcing the will. The service of His life and the sacrifice of His death would infuse a spirit into humanity, and be its regeneration." (p. 104.)

But does not Dr. Watson know that "God hath set Him forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins?" And that He "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, to purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." That "He made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." That the loosening of the grip of sin is effected by His blood. "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood." (Rev. i. 5.) The theology that has this great truth, which was taught by the lips of the Master and His apostles, for its alpha and omega, is alone productive of spiritual life and energy, and that which ignores it is dishonoring to God and a blight upon Christian and pagan lands. I cannot therefore but express my emphatic protest against any book in so far as it slights the central doctrine of the gospel that Christ is "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."

In this brief notice of the volume before me its excellencies have not been mentioned, nor have its theological eccentricities and blemishes been by any means fully indicated, but perhaps enough has been said to show the need of constantly appealing to the Word as our infallible guide. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isa. viii. 20.)

Chester, England, July 9th, 1896.

* "The Mind of the Master," by Rev. John Watson, D.D. (Ian Maclaren). Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Co. 140, 142 Yonge St.