Messenger and Visitor

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True Worship

There is perhaps nothing upon which Christians of all classes and complexions will more cordially agree, than upon the importance of worship. In fact there is in regard to this matter a far wider circircle of agreement, than that which is designated by the word "Christian." For all men who are in any sense religious, however widely they may differ as to the objects of the forms of worship, are agreed upon this, that worship is an essential condition of the religious life. The conversation, recorded by John, between our Lord and the Samaritan woman shows that upon this point there was no dispute between lew and Samaritan. Both had a deep conviction that God should be worshipped, and each in his own way professed to worship the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Apparently to avoid enquiry into her own personal history, the resourceful woman raised the question, so long in dispute between Jew and Samaritan, as to the proper place of worship, and our Lord, while not ignoring the man's remark, avoids a profitless discuss and deals with the subject in a way which reveals it

in the light of fundamental principles. Considered in this light, there are three questions relating to worship which are of more or less importance. These are the questions of Where, and What, and How. The question as to place which the woman has raised. Jesus shows to be of least importance. He does say, indeed, that it had never had any significance, that it had been all one whether men worshipped on Gerizim or Zion, but he says that whatever significance this question may have had is now of the past. There is no longer any holy hill or sacred temple where men must worship God, but for the true and spiritual worshipper every place is holy ground. This word of Jesus, delivering the worshipper from all bondage to place and time, making every spot of earth a possible sanctuary, and every hour of the day or night an hour of prayer, meant an immense step forward, most significant recognition of the light and liberty of the children of God. This has seemed too much for some to accept, and there has always been a disposition, not less strong in our own generation than those which have preceded, to hark back to the old dispensation, with its holy hills. and sacred temples, and consecrated human priesthoods, and to consider some place, chosen of men, and some building, the work of men's hands and consecrated by human ceremonies, as essential to true and acceptable worship. While it is we'll that, in reference to worship as in other matters, proprieties should be observed, and that the sacred associations connected with a house of worship should be duly recognized, these words of our Lord should forever deliver us from the error of supposing that there is anything attaching to any consecrated church which can render worship more acceptable to God

But if the "where" of worship is unimportant. the "what" of worship is in the highest degree significant. The ground upon which our Lord found fault with the Samaritan worship, was not that it was not offered in Ierusalem, but that it was not in-"Ye worship ye know not what." telligent. this respect the Jew had great advantage over the Samaritan, because, recognizing not only Moses, but also the prophets of a later time, he was in poss sion of much priceless instruction concerning God and his dealings with men, which the obstinate blindness of the Samaritan had rejected. Doubtless

it is far better to be such an ignorant worshipper as the Samaritan was than not to be a worshipper at all. But let no one suppose that intelligence in worship is not important, and that if one is only earnest, it matters not what the object of his worship represents to his mind. It may be better for even the heathen in his blindness to worship in his dense ignorance, than not to worship at all. Still it is surely very far from being all one, whether one bows down to wood and stone, or to some saint, or to the Virgin Mary, or whether he worships the Infinite God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Intelligence as to the object of worship, is not to be confounded with any philosophical or theological sub-

tleties of thought concerning the Deity and his modes of expression. The intelligence which Jesus desires on the part of the worshipper is that which is able to recognize God as Father, and this highest knowledge, so often clearly grasped by babes, is

often hidden from the wise and prudent by the

mists of philosophic ignorance.

The "what" and the "how" of worship are neces sarily united and inseparable. The spirit that recognizes God as Father, inspires a child-like attitude of loving trust and expectation, with which the Heavenly Father is well pleased. God seeks such worship. His leart goes out toward it. spirit helps its infirmities. We have seen the little child which is able to take but a few steps alone as vet toddling feebly, uncertainly, toward the mother, and we have seen the mother's arms outstretched, and the child lifted with kisses and tender words of encouragement to its fortress on the maternal breast. So God seeks and helps the trustful souls that worship him in spirit and in truth.

30 30 30 The Unsought bless ng.

The remarkable picture which the evangelist presents in the passage which forms our Bible lesson for the current week, helps us to understand how truly and fully our Lord identified himself with the life of men. Here we see Jesus, wearied with a toilsome journey, sitting by Jacob's Well, waiting for the food which his disciples have gone to purchase, thirsty and longing for a draught of the cool water which the deep well contained. Truly he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. The things which hurt other men hurt him. Toil brings reariness, prolonged abstinence from food and drink bring hunger and thirst. So also, the things which wound the spirit of other men hurt his. He was wounded by unkindness and unreasonable opposition, by fickleness, distrust, and desertion, by bigotry, enmity and treachery; the sin and the suffering of the world were ever weighing upon his spirit. But his fidelity toward God, his patience and love toward men, never failed. He was tried like other men, but, unlike other men, without sin. That the Father was with him, not his lips only, but his life declared. Those who came nearest to him and knew him best felt that he was not only Son of Man, but Son of God. And, today as then, those who are willing with honest hearts to put his teaching to the test as the rule of life, are convinced that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, and that to see him is to see the Father.

One sees in this passage how simple, how human and natural Jesus was in dealing with men and women. Sitting weary and thirsty by the well when the Samaritan woman came to draw water, he at once asked her for a drink, and proceeded to enter into conversation with her touching matters of the highest importance to herself and to the world. Under such circumstances, the ordinary Jewish rabbi would doubtless have bestowed upon the woman nothing beyond a glance of contempt, he would have been very thirsty indeed, before he would have condescenden to ask or accept a drink of water at her hands. Jesus is as ready to speak to this sinful Samaritan woman, and point out to her the way into the Kingdom of God, as he had been in the case of Nicodemus, the eminently respectable Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin. His words to the woman are indeed quite different as to form, from those which he had spoken to the learned Pharisee. In each case Jesus has regard to circumstances and his hearer's powers of apprehension. Nicodemus was taught that religious instruction is of little value without spiritual regeneration, and the woman is taught that real satisfaction for the soul, comes not from a physical but a spiritual source, that the first step toward a true life is re-

pentance of sin, and that true worship is not concerned with this place or that, but with the attitude of the soul to God. The words, "Go call thy husband and come hither," were a very important part of the conversation. The Pharisee and the Samaritan woman were alike in this respect-that each was disposed to ignore the prime essential to entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Nicodemus evidently felt himself prepared to join an advanced class in the college of Christ, he was surprised at being told that the only entrance was by matricula-The woman longed for the satisfaction which the figure of water springing up unto everlasting life implied, but it was necessary that her eyes should be opened to the sinfulness of her life, and that she should understand that salvation means cleansing as well as refreshment. Those lessons which our Lord taught Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman are quite as important in our day as they were then.

"If thou knewest the gift . . . " These words, puzzling to the Samaritan woman, are full of gracious meaning to the regenerate and spiritual mind. Men live on low levels and breathe malarious airs, because they do not understand what broad prospects and life-giving airs are to be enjoyed on the heights. The savage prefers his smoky hut and all the narrowness and squalor of his barbarous life, because he has no experience of the larger and richer life of the civilized man. To the man of coarse. sensual and uncultivated nature, all the wealth of art and literature has but little value, because his mind has never been quickened to apprehend the meaning, or to respond to the beauty of the things that appeal to the intellectual and æsthetic faculties of men. But when the higher faculties are quick ened, and the nobler aspirations are awakened, these men are no longer content to live without the things that minister to the higher and nobler enjoyments. And so of that highest human experience, through which men become partakers of the gift of God in Jesus Christ and enter into the happiness of those whose transgressions are forgiven, and in whose hearts the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit, if men knew this gift of God, the joy and power of this divine and holy fellowship, they would never be content to seek to quench their thirst at earthly cisterns.

JE 36 36 The War.

With the two hundred thousand or more troops British and Colonial, now in South Africa, it is to be presumed that Lord Roberts and his subordinate commanders must be effecting something in the direction of bringing the war to a successful issue. But it is to be confessed that little evidence in support of such a conclusion is to be gained from the despatches that have come to hand dur-ing the past week. The rumors alluded to in our last week's issue, to the effect that General Buller had again crossed the Tugela and was moving in the direction of Ladysmith, later advices showed to have been premature, but on Monday, the 5th inst., a part of General Buller's forces did effect a successful crossing by a pontoon bridge, at a point to the eastward of Potgleter's Drift, and established a position at a place called Vaal Krantz. At the same time the Boers' entrenchments were subjected to a terrible bombardment, and their attention was attracted by an attack of a strong British force in another quarter, so that the crossing and the occupation of Vaal Krantz was effected without very heavy It was also held against a very determined of the enemy. The point thus reached is said to be some twelve miles from Ladysmith by a naturally easy road, but one so effectually commanded by the artillers of the enemy, that an advance to the relief of the be leagured town, if successful, could be achieved only at the expense of so great a loss of men, that General Buller considered it unwise to pursue his advantage in that direction, and accordingly withdrew his troops to the south side of the Tugela. It is at least questionable whether General Buller expected to do more that keep the attention of the enemy strongly drawn to the Tugela and prevent the Boers from sending reinforcements to Cape Colony, where, it is believed, General Roberts is preparing for an important forward movement. The latest despatches at hand at time of writing, say, however, that General Buller is preparing to make another determined attack for the relief of Ladysmith, but this too may be a blind to cover other movements. The despatches indicate that in Cape Colony the Boers have been showing unwonted activity during the week. In the vicinity of Sterkstrom and Colesburg, where Generals Gatacre and French are operating, the Boers have taken the offensive. but do not appear to have accomplished any important results. At Modder River there has been no movemen of General General M which are Donald cr tion at K artillery at view to sur that the time to be Methuen. fontein, ha movement prevent a appears u now at Mo ing affairs Free State to the st specting t conjecture

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