

THE HOME MISSION JOURNAL.

VOLUME III, No. 4.

ST. JOHN, N. B., FEBRUARY 26, 1901.

WHOLE No. 54

An Interpretation.

THE narrative before us is one of those wider outlooks of the life of Jesus. He had spent His ministry among His own nation. Now that he had but a few days more to live, the needs of men far beyond the borders of Palestine arrested His attention. The "Greeks," who sought him, represented the whole foreign world.

In His own mind He probably reviewed facts like these. He had precipitated a crisis with the leaders of his own people which was rapidly culminating in His death. There was no longer any opportunity for a new ministry; but the natural feeling of regret was overcome by the knowledge that His death meant His introduction to a large ministry. Just as the seed gives up its life that it may bear fruit, so He was entering into wider and profounder relations with human life everywhere. He would not live and teach among the Greeks in bodily form, as He had among the Jews, but through His death He would come into no less effective and inspiring relations with them.

In view of this thought we are to interpret His saying: "If any man serve me let him follow me, and where I am there shall also my servant be." His relationship with men was in no sense dependent upon His bodily presence. The man who follows Him has so close a tie subsisting between His Master and himself that in the future he will be with Him. This is the truth that not only explains the present ministry of Christ in the world, but it lies at the very basis of the believer's assurance of his victory over death. In the fellowship of the human soul with Christ there is the promise of eternal life.

In some respects the verses that immediately follow give us a clearer and profounder glimpse into our Lord's consciousness than any other passage in the New Testament, unless we except the prayer in Gethsemane. Is it unreasonable to suppose that He rapidly reviewed all the steps that had brought Him to this crisis, and in His trouble of soul questioned whether he should pray that He might be saved from the crisis? Then there surged back into His heart the bright assurance of the reality of the truth to which he had just given expression. The unity of his life was found in confidence in that truth. He had put himself in this position because of his loyalty to it. The troubled soul becomes calm again as he breathes the prayer of submission, "Father, glorify thy name." The critical nature of this experience through which our Lord was passing was shown, as at the baptism and the Transfiguration in the voice from heaven. Not, to be sure, for his sake, but a miraculous witness to the moral victory he had achieved in his own soul.

No reader of this passage can fail to note the exultant tone of our Lord in the words that follow. He saw the judgment of the world, and the prince of the world cast out—the final victory of righteousness—and he saw all men drawn to him. It is pressing the language too far to see in it the promise of universal salvation, but undoubtedly it does imply that we are to look forward to a time when the dominant forces of human life shall be on the side of Christ.

The Layman of the Period.

A NUMBER of addresses have been spoken and published during the last few weeks on the Twentieth Century minister, but we have yet to hear of one on the Twentieth Century layman, and yet that suggests a phase of the religious outlook that in some respects is quite as important as the considerations relating to ministers.

Indeed, we are disposed to hold that ministers can only do their most efficient work as they sharply conceive the ideal modern layman, for a main object of their preaching and pastoral work must be the training of such laymen.

It is not just at this point that a good many of the popular theories as to church work break

down in practice? No matter how complete the organization of a church may be for evangelistic work, unless men, on being brought into the membership of a church, are trained to noble character and service, the body itself will fall far short of the Christian ideal. And, on the other hand, there is no evangelistic influence, barring the direct action of the Holy Spirit, that does quite so much to lead men to a religious life as the spectacle of honest, true-minded, generous-hearted Christian men and women united in the bonds of church fellowship.

We believe that if our pastors spoke their full thought upon this matter they would say that the most formidable obstacle in their communities to the cause of Christ was not the wickedness or the indifference of the non-church-going population, but the low standards with which many members of the church are content. The fact that a leading man in a church has divorced his wife for unscriptural reasons and married another; that he has failed dishonestly in business and cheated his creditors; that he rents his property for saloons; that he is known to be tricky and untrustworthy—these are the things that blight and hinder the progress of God's cause through the work of that church.

The toning up of the standards of average Christian conduct is not to be accomplished by setting up a few more man-made sins as the things to be avoided, but by coming down to the bed-rock of absolute righteousness. If the expediency of indulging in certain amusements is at all debatable, there is no ground whatever for denying the absolute obligation of honesty, of purity, of trustworthiness in all human relations.

And we might as well look the fact in the face that no professions of spirituality make up in the smallest degree for a lack of the common moral virtues in professing Christians. Men are not saved by character, but they are saved for character, and the only conceivable evidence of salvation that really weighs with others than the man himself as to the reality of his salvation is not descriptions of feelings or of inner experiences, but the substantial results of a changed life. In every community there are probably some men outside the churches of superior moral character to some of those in them. Christianity does not pretend to make men perfect instantaneously; but in the large, if the professing Christians of a town do not as a body represent a higher ideal of pure family life, of business rectitude, of human sympathy and helpfulness, than the unbelieving community, the influence of that church will not go far.

It has often been said that we need an ethical revival, and that is true, but an ethical revival that is the outcome of distinctively Christian truth and motive. The teaching of such a man as Prof. Felix Adler produces some fine results in character, but his teaching is not distinctively Christian. What we need is the noblest results in character as the resultant of distinctively Christian teaching. The Church must show the world not simply moral conduct, but the noblest moral conduct rooted and grounded in Christian ideas and impulses. The layman of the Twentieth Century is a topic that will reward a good deal of close study.

Use very Little Machinery.

C. H. WOOLSTON, D. D.

OMITTING the usual platitude of an introduction I would say that the best way of conducting evangelistic meetings in our churches is to do it in your own way, and by your own church exclusively. Union efforts sound very broad and brotherly, but twenty years of experience has taught me that these union efforts terminate to the disadvantage of the Baptists and the advantage of pedobaptists. I do not believe in a revival gotten up, restricted into a given number of parts with secretaries, over-

seers, superintendents, and a large corps of evangelists, who have been gathered from all parts of the earth. I do not believe that a work of grace can be started by a great opening service at some central station. This is machinery with a vengeance and is the rattle of dead men's bones. As a Baptist I am out of spirit with such work. We are at our best when we are doing our best in our own church and in our own way. I never plan for extraordinary campaigns that are to capture the entire city. I do not believe that this world is to be converted during this dispensation. It is my business to work with God in securing from the world His "called-out" ones," and therefore I do not fret or go down into the valley of lamentation because the entire city is not shaken when I have delivered a message. The best way, as it seems to me, is to call the church together for a season of waiting on God and announcing to them that for the next coming weeks meetings will be held nightly in the church, and the Gospel be proclaimed in its simplicity. Very little, if any machinery. Plenty of latitude for the Holy Spirit to work his way and then to watch and work for the salvation of souls. Sometimes I secure an evangelist who has a call, and a singer who has inspiration, and the result of this simpler plan has been that for fourteen years in my present church I have had a revival every year, have baptized 1106 during that time, and my experience has thus taught me that this way is the best way for me. *Baptist Commonwealth.*

Dependence Upon Prayer.

JOHN B. GOUGH PIDGE.

Through all the centuries one prayer has ever been on the lips of God's people—the prayer for a revival. The church stands in the attitude of the ancient prophet, with his petition ever ascending from the streaming censor of prayer in her upraised hand: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." And in answer to that prayer, wave after wave of revival has swept over the world. Yet with all the experience of the past to guide us, we are no better prepared to lay down rules for such a work of grace than our fathers were. For who can tell the way in which God shall choose to come? "The wind bloweth where it listeth." By all the experience of the past, and by all the promises of God, we are constrained to believe that he will revive us again; but how his power shall be manifested, and what peculiar form the next great revival shall take no man can predict. We try a method, and it succeeds; we try it again and it fails. Perhaps we get to trusting the method, instead of God, and so he cannot bless it. Once the brazen serpent was a source of untold good to ancient Israel. Afterwards the people began to worship it, and then Hezekiah ground it to powder before their astonished gaze, calling it contemptuously, "Nehus-tan," a thing of brass. So a method worshipped is doomed to destruction.

As we look on the last fifty years, we behold one method, inaugurated by Mr. Moody, that of monster meetings, elaborately planned and organized to the minutest detail. Never was the spirit of business before so conspicuous in the service of God. It was a wonderful illustration of sanctified common sense. The success of that method has led many workers to believe that it is the only way to secure a revival. But because it was once successful, we are not sure it always will be. In fact we are certain it will not always succeed, for we have seen it fail conspicuously of late. In fact that movement seemed to have spent its force, even in Mr. Moody's own hands. His latter efforts were not to be compared with his earlier, in the matter of soul-winning. Back of Mr. Moody's advent lies the revival of '58, perhaps the greatest of the century, introduced by no elaborate preparations, promoted by no machinery. Its origin has generally been attributed to the daily prayer-meeting, held at noon, in the