

Christian Mirror

AND GENERAL MISSIONARY REGISTER.

"MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO, AND KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED."—DANIEL XII. 4.

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GENERAL LITERATURE.

LOVE OF THE JEWS FOR JERUSALEM.

WITH all this accumulated misery, with all this insult and scorn heaped upon the Israelite here, more even than in any other country, why, it will be asked, does he not fly to other and happier lands? Why does he seek to rest under the shadow of Jerusalem's walls? Independent of that natural love of country which exists among this people, two objects bring the Jew to Jerusalem—to study the Scriptures and the Talmud; and then to die, and have his bones laid with his forefathers, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, even as the bones of the patriarchs were carried up out of Egypt. No matter what, or how far distant the country where the Jew resides, he still lives upon the hope that he will one day journey homeward. No climate can change, no season quench that patriotic ardour with which the Jew beholds Jerusalem, even through the vista of a long futurity. On his approach to the city, while yet within a day's journey, he puts on his best apparel; and when the first view of it bursts upon his sight, he rents his garments, falls down to weep, and pray over the long-sought object of his pilgrimage, and with dust sprinkled on his head, he enters the city of his forefathers. No child ever returned home after long absence with more yearnings of affection; no proud baron ever beheld his ancestral towers and lordly halls, when they had become another's, with greater sorrow than the poor Jew when he first beholds Jerusalem. This, at least, is patriotism.

"It is curious," says the learned author from whom I have already quoted, "after surveying this almost total desertion of Palestine; to read the indication of fond attachment to its very air and soil, scattered about in the Jewish writings; still it is said, that man is esteemed most blessed who after his death shall reach the land of Palestine, and be buried there; or even shall have his ashes sprinkled by a handful of its sacred dust. 'The air of the land of Israel,' says one, 'makes a man wise;' another writes, 'he who walks four cubits in the land of Israel is sure of being a son of life to come.' 'The great wise men are wont to kiss the borders of the Holy Land, to embrace its ruins, and roll themselves in its dust.' 'The sins of all those are forgiven who inhabit the land of Israel.' He who is buried there is reconciled with God; as though he were buried under the altar. The dead buried in the land of Canaan first come to life in the days of the Messiah." It is worthy of remark, as stated by Sandys, that so strong is the desire this singular people have always manifested for being buried within these sacred limits, that in the seventeenth century large quantities of their bones were yearly sent thither from all parts of the world, for the

purpose of being interred in the valley of Jehoshaphat; for the Turkish rulers at that time permitted but a very small number of the Jews to enter Palestine. Sandys saw ship-loads of this melancholy freight; Joppa, and the valley of Jehoshaphat, are literally paved with Jewish tombstones.—*Wild's Travels.*

BENEVOLENCE OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.

IF Christianity has its essence in benevolence, it is to be expected that benevolent action will be a very prominent characteristic of all true Christians; and it is fair to estimate the amount of true religion in a church, much in proportion to the spirit of self-sacrificing benevolence manifested by them. There was no particular in which the piety of the primitive church had a more advantageous manifestation, than in that of its benevolence. In the department of religious benevolence it is enough to say of them, that they sustained the publication of the Gospel over almost the whole known world. And the history of their benevolence in secular departments, tells much to their honor.

As to the duty of providing for the poor, their benevolence was without a parallel. The whole community of believers assumed the work of providing for the poor of the church, rather as a privilege than a burden. The duties of the Sabbath were brought to a close by attentions to the poor. Regular lists of those who needed such attentions were kept, and Christians vied with each other in their zeal and enthusiasm in supplying their wants. Each one brought under public notice the case of any necessitous individuals known to them—which cases were met by funds of the church, supplied by regular contributions.

But their charities were not confined to the public channels of the church—individual responsibility was not merged in associated action. It was regarded as a sacred duty, to visit the sick and the poor. This office more especially devolved on the female members of the church. The time which could be spared from the prior claims of their households, the pious matrons devoted to these errands of mercy, in listening to the widow's tale of woe, and cheering the huts of poverty. In those days there were no hospitals for the sick; and the want of such institutions was supplied, in a measure, by the personal attentions of Christians. The sick, both of the church and of pagans, and the infants which hard-hearted pagan mothers had thrown out to die, were objects of the tender mercies of Christian women. These, moving amid the comforts of domestic life, and some of them ladies of the highest rank, scrupled not to undertake the most menial offices for the poor and the sick—such as acting as nurses, administering medicine, dressing ulcers, exposing themselves to contagion, and preparing the dead for burial. Their labor and their purse were freely devoted to the most exhausting and dangerous services, both as physicians and nurses, and ambassadors of a God of mercy. In some times and places where the victims of disease

were very numerous, an order of official persons, in addition to the deacons and deaconesses, was appointed, especially to attend the sick in malignant and pestilential diseases. In the time of Theodosius, there were in Alexandria alone 600 of such persons.

Those suffering persecutions being at that time numerous, made large demands on the charities of the church; and most cheerfully was the demand met. Christians flocked to the prisons when any of their number were incarcerated—patiently bearing the insults of guards and jailers—using every means of consolation and persuasion, to procure the release of the persecuted. And when admitted to the prisons, they performed every office of kindness for the imprisoned. And when the persecuted were sent, like slaves, to labor in mines, the benevolence of Christians followed them. Some undertook toilsome journeys, encountering every peril, to administer consolation to the afflicted. In one case a party set out for Egypt, to visit their brethren in the mines of Cilicia. When they came to Cesarea, and their purpose was known, some of them were arrested and cruelly mutilated, and others shared a worse fate. But no danger deterred these people from works of mercy.

This love for the souls of men was, in some good proportion, alike daring and self-sacrificing. To preach the Gospel then, was a work of more danger and self-sacrifice than it is now. And the work of promoting the salvation of men, was not confined to preachers of the Gospel. Many in private life, spent every thing beside what was needful for their own support, in supplying the destitute with copies of the Scriptures. Some without property, underwent the most painful privations and services, to communicate the means of salvation. One man sold himself as a slave into the family of a heathen, performing the most servile offices, in order to become the means of converting the family; and having secured this object, he received his liberty as his reward. And a second time he sold himself as a slave, now to the Governor of Sparta, and there continued to perform a slave's task for two years, when he was again successful, and was treated no longer as a slave.

Such was the benevolence of early Christians. And, though the changes of times, customs and institutions may have made a change in the modes of exercising benevolence, yet what is wanted more than any thing else by the Church of the present day, is the return of the same spirit of benevolence. It is too much forgotten that Christianity, having its foundation in the great sacrifice of Christ, requires of the followers of Christ something of the same spirit of self-sacrifice for the good of others. It is forgotten that no man liveth to himself. An all-prevailing spirit of selfishness is chilling the fountains of piety, curtailing the means of spreading the Gospel, counteracting and crippling the energies of the ministry, and distancing the day when the ransomed world is to be brought to the feet of Christ.—*N. E. Puritan.*