

Our Contributors

The Irrevocable Record.

REV. PROF. W. G. JORDAN, D. D.

What I have written, I have written.
John XIX 22.

This is a striking saying uttered in strange circumstances. This text has two links in my own life. I remember hearing a powerful sermon upon it when I was a boy; little now remains of the discourse, but the text was deeply impressed, and the thought of the solemnity of life and the irrevocable past continued to haunt the mind. Second it was used as the subject of a sermon the last in a series of special sermons to young men, preached at intervals in a pastorate extending over nine years, my first and only charge in Canada. The message of those particular sermons had been given, an important part of a pastor's life had passed away and linked itself with the life of many young men, and so it could be said even in that connection:—"What I have written, I have written."

In moments of high excitement men utter striking words which reveal their own nature and express truths deeper than they themselves realize at the time. This fact is brought out with special distinctness in the scenes around the cross. We need only note three illustrations. Before the crucifixion, Caiaphas, the high priest, declared that it is expedient that one man should die, his declaration is true but not in the low selfish sense that lies upon the surface. During the crucifixion there were those who said:—"He saved others, himself he cannot save," another profound truth carelessly uttered. After the great tragedy Pilate causes to be written over the Cross the words:—"Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews," another far-reaching statement by one who did not know its full meaning. When we ask the question how this came to be written, we are told that it was a custom to place in this way a charge at the head of doomed criminals. That however accounts only for the fact of the writing, not for its form and motive. Three times Pilate had declared "I find no crime in him." There was a charge but no crime? When this charge had served its cruel purpose, those who used it wished to forget it, and to have it forgotten. This is not Pilate's view of the matter, he has been defeated but now takes his revenge. He has lost the main position but he can be stubborn on a small point. He will not grant a revised reading, he sent away the cavilling Jewish leaders with a sharp statement that shows the bitter feeling behind it "*what I have written, I have written.*"

Jesus was a mystery to Pilate, but as a Roman he knew what "justice" meant; and in delivering up this strange prisoner he rejected justice and was false to duty. He is now writhing under a sense of defeat, and he writes the thing that is true but that he does not understand "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" written in the three great languages of the world means here is a lowly king, a rejected king, a king of universal significance. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the church recognizes this with greater clearness, and disciples seek to carry out into their lives its sacred meaning. That these words should survive so long and stand out so dramatically be-

fore the eyes of later generations of men, is something that Pilate never anticipated, but in his tone there is a sense of the solemnity of life. And is not this one of the things that makes life so solemn to all of us that what is done cannot be recalled, that the record of the past cannot be re-written. There are men to-day who would give all they possess to undo the past but they are mocked by the sheer impossibility of the thing; we have to reckon, not with "what might have been" but with what is. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

The privilege of youth is so much of life in the future, and in working out their life and building up their character they may avail themselves of great lessons of the past. This saying hardly seems to be appropriate in their case and yet we cannot tell how soon the account may be closed and the young man may have to say "What I have written I have written."

Let the young then remember that they are writing:—"a revelation of themselves." This world's photography shows only the outward form and feature, and so much of the inward life as can be revealed by that. But there is a spiritual record, our whole life as it unfolds before God and men reveals our nature and reacts upon our growing character. The time will come when so far as this sphere we have to look back upon a record complete and fixed. 11. *A judgment of the Christ*, we like Pilate have to face the question "What shall I do then with Jesus that is called the Christ?" It is not merely that some aggressive preacher drives us into a corner and demands decision. He is here pleading for himself, it may be through a father's prayer or a mother's heart but also in His own person, so that we can have immediate knowledge of Him—"So I am with you always." The fact of Christ, of his love and sacrifice every young man must face, it is the highest privilege and the greatest responsibility. Over His cross we must write our judgment of Him. Now is the time for choice and decision. If we learn to surrender ourselves and seek His strength when the end comes we may be able to say with humility but also with some measure of gratitude and hope:—"What I have written I have written."

What Good Will Baptism do an Infant Child?

BY REV. W. A. MACKAY, B. A., D. D.

This question is not a difficult one to answer. In God's ancient church there were those who asked what good will circumcision do? for infants eight days old could not understand the nature of it. The Apostle, with great emphasis made reply, "Much every way" (Rom. 3:1, 2). So we say of infant baptism. It does good to many persons, and in many ways. Its benefits may be considered, (1), with reference to the parents; (2), with reference to the congregation, and (3), with reference to the infant child.

To the parents it is a means of holy fellowship with the Most High on a sweetly solemn occasion. It is on record how an eminent servant of Christ Rev. J. McDonald, of Calcutta, felt on the occasion of the baptism of his infant child. Let me here reproduce some of his words: "This day in the kind providence of God,

I have been permitted and enabled to dedicate my little child to my covenant with God in baptism. And for this I give thanks. Oh, what a privilege it is. I trust I have had communion with the Lord in this deed if ever I had it." The remembrance of the solemn service will always excite conscientious Christian parents to greater faithfulness, and will greatly encourage them in the discharge of their duties to their children, whether they baptize them or not. But if they are Christians indeed, a public recognition of their parental duties, and a solemn sealed engagement to perform them, will surely increase the motives to their performance, and thus furnish additional security that they will not be neglected.

If the baptism takes place in the sanctuary, where it always ought to be observed, unless special circumstances prevent, there will be benefit to all God's people present. The parents with their child stand at the baptismal font. The minister, after giving a "Thus saith the Lord," for the ordinance about to be administered, invites all present to unite in commending parents and child to God. The holy rite is then performed. The minister sprinkles pure water upon the infant's head, and, announcing the name of the child says, "I baptize this child in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The people hearing and seeing this, and beholding the seal of God set upon the child, are impressively reminded of the covenant in which they themselves stand with God, and the duties and privileges of that covenant. Our lost estate by nature, the necessity of regeneration and cleansing through the blood of sprinkling and by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and our obligation to holiness of life are vividly brought before the attention of all. One and another under the gracious influence of the Spirit, will be reminded of his or her own baptism, and will be constrained to inquire, am I living as a baptized person ought to live?

But what of the benefits to the unconscious infant? Again, "much every way." Is it no benefit to the child to have pious, conscientious parents publicly and solemnly engage to bring it up for the Lord? Is it no benefit to a child to have a whole church interceding with God for it, sending up a cloud of incense on its behalf? Is it no benefit to a child to have the mark of the Lord Jesus upon it, and to be recognized as "the heritage of the Lord" (Ps. 127:3); "born unto God" (Ezek. 16:20); "a child of the covenant" (Acts 3:25); "to whom pertain the promise" (Acts 2:39); and "the privileges of the Church of God"? (Luke 18:16). No benefit to be enrolled as a scholar in the school of Christ, and to have pledged to it the care, the discipline, and the prayers of the church? God did not think there was no benefit when He had infants from "a month old and upwards" put upon special training for His service (Ses Num. 3:28). Why should the unconsciousness of the child be thought a barrier to divine blessing? (None whatever). Are we not every day doing what we hope is for the good of our children, and yet our children may not be conscious of it? If a friend should propose to invest valuable property for an infant child, and wish the parents to sign certain papers, would the intelligent parent say, of what use can this ceremony be to an unconscious child?