

SPECIAL  
ARTICLES

## Our Contributors

BOOK  
REVIEWS

## WE ARE GOD'S WORKMANSHIP.

"For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works."—Ephesians ii. 10.

It is characteristic of the teaching of the Apostle Paul to gather his message around certain words. They are the headlines to what he himself calls "my Gospel." In the Gospels it is phrases and institutions and customs that Christ dealt with, and through which He presents His message; but with Paul it is different. He finds in great central words the mystery and revelation of the Gospel. But he uses three words as symbols to express its inner and spiritual truths. It is in this way that he uses the word Creation. He regards it as a fundamental word of the Gospel. It takes us back to the beginning of time. This is another of the favorite methods of his teaching. He is always going back to first things. It is this that leads him into his comparisons between the first Adam and the last Adam, the natural man and the spiritual man, the transient and the eternal, and the righteousness of the law, and the righteousness of grace. He loves to dwell on the contrast between the first creation and the second creation. To Paul they both had their origin in Christ. For the beloved disciple and he were agreed that "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." In his Epistle to the Colossians Paul dwells specially upon the fact that physical creation has its origin in Christ; and it is through the outward visible creation that he lays the basis for the inner spiritual creation of the new life. It, too, has its root and life in Christ. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

In this new creation we are God's workmanship. The Apostle wishes to make clear to the Ephesians that they had no hand in effecting this great transformation in their life and character. It did not originate with men, nor in earthly relations. It is a change that is produced not from below, but from above, just as all our best life and best things come to us from above. The Apostle looked at the matter in this way. "Our physical life comes to us from God, and this life is given to us that we might meet the conditions of physical life and fulfil them. In all its necessities and work, and failures and successes, we are never to lose sight of the ends for which we enjoy it, and it is in the realization of them that its blessings come to us. Our spiritual life, too, comes to us from God, and its growth and development must be according to the laws of the Kingdom of Grace. Paul dwelt much upon the mysteries and splendor of nature. Her agonies and struggles and revelations had a wonderful fascination for him, but it was because they were symbols for reading the hidden mysteries of the heart, and interpreting the secret and quiet workings of grace. It is through the Divine workings in the sphere of nature that the Apostle is led to consider us, as God's workmanship. What a prolonged and rare combination of forces is needed in the physical world to produce a perfect work. There is "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The process is slower in the spiritual world and less complete; for many of the forces found working in it are not directly under Divine control and guidance. At conversion we pass as an apprentice into the Divine workshop, and through our stupidity and ignorance and want of interest it is a long apprenticeship that we have to serve; and when the day of our discharge comes we will find how poorly we have mastered our business. But the Divine workman can make much of the worst materials. He has methods of His own that can produce marvelous results; and by the severity of His processes He knows how to turn the waste by-products of humanity into good material. It is told that Michael Angelo was passing a block of marble that had been rejected by a sculptor, and he saw the possibilities that lay in it. It is said that he saw an angel sleeping in it. He secured it, and set to work. It was a slow and toilsome task, but gradually the wings and form of his angel began to appear,

and at last the despised block of marble was transformed into the likeness of a perfect angel. Never did the sculptor work on so unpromising material as God has to use when He is shaping us into Christian men and women but the end of His chiselling of us is that "we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before-ordained that we should walk in them."

Let us note how that in this Epistle, and indeed, in all Paul's Epistles, we are constantly meeting with the phrase "in Christ." There is nothing in the spiritual life to be had apart from Christ. The Apostle represents his own life as enclosed within that of Christ. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Amidst the persecutions and discomforts of life it is such an assurance and strength to him to know, "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Not only does he associate all spiritual blessings with Christ, but also the dispensation of the fulness of times, when all things shall be gathered together in one in Christ. As if the world and the universe could only find their true life and perfect development in Him, as well as the individual believer. Everywhere with the Apostle, Christ is the fountain-head of all life and goodness, and there is no perfection in any sphere of life apart from Him. Just as Noah, shut in the ark, was safe from the rising, rushing waters around him, so in Christ are safe from the surging temptations that sweep around us in our daily life. Not only are we safe, but we have power and courage for the duties and responsibilities that rest upon us.

In the previous part of this chapter Paul had spoken so much of grace. He had told the Ephesians, "By grace we are saved." He had magnified the exceeding riches of this grace. But they were not to go away with the idea that there was nothing else in the Christian life but grace. Indeed, grace is given that it might lead to very much else, and specially to good works. Did it not do so, it would remain barren and unfruitful. What is very interesting to find here is that the grace and good works have the same origin—they are both in Christ; the strength and fulness of the grace are tested by the quality of the good works. It is a solemn and oppressive thought that there can be no good works apart from Christ; for without Him we can do nothing. Are we then to write off all the good works of those who do not believe in Christ, and of those who are still unconverted? We dare not do so. It is not our province, and in dealing with such a subject charity is the word that should be not only on our lips, but in our hearts. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" It is Christ Himself that has laid down the test of spiritual life. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." The tree has its roots in the earth, and they feed and nourish its trunk and branches and leaves, and make it fruitful; so Christ is the root of our lives that flower into fruitfulness; for in Him we are rooted and grounded in love." II.

It is said of an old Scotch woman, when she heard a body of prominent English Churchmen discussing the evidences of Christianity, and the many points in which they were lacking, she looked at them with her faithful, earnest gaze and said, "Ah, ye dinna ken our Jamie or ye would not say that Christ is dead." And when they asked who "Our Jamie" was, she told them of what a bad boy he had been, and how he had made his home so unhappy, until Jesus got hold of him, with his pierced hands, and now "Our Jamie is the best boy in town."

Better the approval of God than the applause of the world.

## TALKS ABOUT JESUS.\*

The table of contents in this book indicates that it is essentially one for the quiet hour, calculated to awaken earnest thought over the personality and power of the living Saviour and give scope to practical meditation on the most wonderful life ever recorded in human history—a life which is more and more enazing the attention of intelligent and thinking men and women. The work is divided into three parts with a short chapter on "study notes"; and the three parts are sub-divided into fourteen short chapters dealing with the main facts and experiences of the wonderful life of Jesus. The three parts are: The Purpose of Jesus, The Person of Jesus, The Great Experiences of Jesus' Life. The thoughts grouped around these divisions of the book are in an important sense beautiful new pictures of a beautiful and beneficent life.

In the introductory chapter of the book the author says: "A great musician strikes the key-note of a great piece of music, and can skillfully keep it ever sounding its melody through all the changes clear to the end. It has been in my heart to wish that I could do something like that here. If what has come to me has gotten out of me into these pages, there will be found a dominant note of sweetest music—the winsomeness of God in Jesus. It is in my heart, too, to add this, that I have a friend whose constant presence and prayer have been the atmosphere of this little book in its making."

\*"Outlet Talks About Jesus." By Rev. S. D. Gordon, author of "Outlet Talks on Prayer"; Toronto, William Briggs.

## GREATLY USEFUL.

By C. H. Wetherbee.

The Christian who has a yearning to be as useful to God as he possibly can, he is sure to be helped by God to realize his longings. It is related that Rev. Joseph Patch, a Presbyterian minister, resigned the pastorate of a strong church forty years ago, where he had remained twenty years. His object was to go into destitute regions and found churches. He first went to Stevens Point, Wisconsin, in the centre of a lumber region. A writer says: "He would go to a new lumber camp and preach regularly, driving his hardy Indian son-in-law many miles to reach the new town. In many places his was the first preaching which had been heard. Mr. Patch would preach in a new lumbering town until he had made so many converts that the Home Board would send a man there. Then he would begin his work at some other destitute point. He has done this again and again, and several of the churches he has founded are now strong churches, self-supporting. He is now ninety-two years old, but he is preaching regularly in Shantytown, sixteen miles from his home, driving through all sorts of weather, and Wisconsin is not famous for a balmy climate." It is apparent that that minister has been greatly useful during his very long life. He might have remained in some large place, receiving a liberal salary and having his labors confined to a small territory; but he preferred to go out into remote regions, where the gospel had not been proclaimed, and there found new churches, and thus widen the Lord's Kingdom. It seems to be true that but very few young men, just out of theological seminaries, will consent to do frontier work and make pinching sacrifices. But there are many strongly established churches in our land that never would have come into existence if it had not been for the pioneer work of such men as Mr. Patch.