

The Christian.

ST. JOHN, N. B., MAY, 1895.

EDITORIAL.

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO PHILEMON.

Paul's letter to Philemon, is, in the opinion of competent judges, a model of manly reasoning and pathetic eloquence, excelled by no piece of literature, ancient or modern, that has reached us.

Its value to the Christian student is in its clear exhibition of the power of God and the wisdom of God in the life of a true believer. Looking at it and at Paul's former life, we can contrast the feelings and life of Saul of Tarsus and of Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ. He was no ordinary man. He was a born leader of men—a leader before his conversion, and a leader after, and honest in both. In the first he was a reader of Moses. Moses was his lawgiver and mediator; and while he read him, the veil was on his heart, so thick as to exclude the love of God, and all pity for the men and women whom he committed to prison and to death. The cries of the angelic Stephen only roused his wrath. "And Saul was consenting unto his death."

But when the reading turned to the Lord, and the Lord Jesus Christ was the lawgiver and mediator, the veil was taken away, and the love of God flowed into his heart and, thence in warm currents, to his fellow-men as it sparkles in his shortest letter on record.

Philemon resided at Colosse, and was converted through Paul's ministry (v. 19). Paul rejoiced greatly in hearing of his faithfulness to Christ and his people, and constantly prayed for his increasing usefulness. He wrote this letter to him from Rome, probably near the close of the two years in which he dwelt in his own hired house. (Acts xxviii. 30), sending his warmest salutations to him and the faithful brethren who worshipped as a church in his house. He wrote other letters as Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ, this as Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ, stepping down from the platform of apostolic authority to stand beside his "dearly beloved brother" while earnestly pleading for his favor toward a younger brother in the Lord.

Thomas Scott says, "Onesimus, a slave of Philemon's, having as it is generally thought, been guilty of some dishonesty, left his master and fled to that city (Rome) though at the distance of several hundred miles. When he came, the then curiosity, or some other motive, induced him to attend on St. Paul's ministry, which it pleased God to bless for his conversion. After he had given very satisfactory proofs of a real change, and manifested an excellent disposition, by a suitable behaviour which had greatly endeared him to the apostle, he judged it proper to send him back to his master to whom he wrote this epistle, in order to pro-

cure Onesimus a more favorable reception than he could have otherwise expected."

In pleading with Philemon to receive Onesimus, he shows that as an apostle, he could boldly command him to do a thing so becoming a true Christian; but he rather urged it as a free act of love, both to a new born child of God and to the aged Paul now suffering imprisonment for his fidelity to Christ. If you have a favor for me, let it come to the son of my old age, begotten in my bonds. It was very wrong for him to leave you for a time, but it may turn out as the means of your receiving him forever, not now as a slave but as a brother beloved in the Lord, for he is a dear brother to me; but how much more to you both in the flesh and in the Lord. If you would like to receive me, his father receives him for me. If he has wronged you or owes you anything, charge me with it, and I solemnly promise to pay it without even mentioning that you owe yourself to me. I know right well how gladly you would attend to me in my sufferings and cheer my loneliness if you were here, and I might keep Onesimus to do these things in your place, but I would not think of it without your hearty approval, and making it your act of love, and so I send him without a lingering doubt that you will do more for him than I ask. Oh! give me this rejoicing satisfaction.

Besides this, prepare me a lodging at your home; for I expect soon to be at liberty to leave this city, and then to enjoy that meeting with you which you have so long and earnestly prayed for."

The accounts we have in other places of Onesimus' future as a prominent member in the Church at Colosse, and perhaps a minister of the word, make it more than probable that Philemon did more for him than the loving apostle asked for.

Original Contributions.

I AM THE LORD, I CHANGE NOT.

Malachi iii. 6.

Although this sentence describes a remarkable saying, yet there is none but God who can say I change not, as changeableness is an attribute common to all created beings, and as it is in and through him we live, move, and have our being, we are constantly reminded of the frailty of mankind. The passing scenes in life tell us of the change that awaits us. We look upon nature and we see the advanced seasons hailing with delight the spring time with its full clothing of summer leaves, looking forward with joy to the harvest time when we shall gather the ripe fruit of autumn. As the seasons close, the flowers drop their bright robes as also doth the tree its fading leaf, which as a monitor to man rehearsing the lesson of his weakness and reminding him that we all do fade as a leaf. There is not only a change, but it reminds us of decay, as the poets of all ages have found in nature's changing scenes emblems of human frailty and decay. The sacred writers abound in comparisons of this sort—"As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth: for the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more."

We are reminded on every hand that time is winging us away. Nature tells us of

withering things. The Bible reveals to us that man must die. Job asks the question—"If a man die shall he live again." No doubt but what he had an idea that this was not all of life here on earth—he had an intimation of a life beyond, feeling it was not all of life to live or all of death to die. And so the words of the Saviour comes to us as they did to his disciples before his ascension—"Because I live ye shall live also." As your life is hid with Christ in God, thus our thoughts are raised from mortal things—fading flowers, withering trees, a fleeting world and dying friends, to Him who changes not. We must change, droop, and die, but is this all? Is death the final pause in our career? the close of our being? We answer no. For the apostle Paul says—"To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." The autumn of life will come—the darkness of death will close over our present form of being, opening the way to a new and brighter state when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.

We are reminded of change when we look at the trees clothed in green foliage which is soon killed by the frost of winter; but while this outward clothing wilts and dies, the heart or inner life lives on through the winter until spring, then they are clothed again. These are pleasant suggestions of such future changes, as the seasons roll on, the withered trees will be restored, and there will be a resurrection of nature in new form, clad with a new garment of leaves, but identified as the same tree.

So it is with man when the cold frost of disease and the chilly winds of death comes to this outward tabernacle in which the soul lives; yet the inner life or soul of man lives on awaiting the time when the glorious resurrection will take place—when the angel's trumpet shall sound, and all those that sleep in Jesus will hear the voice of God and come forth.

Then shall this corruption put on incorruption, this mortal put on immortality, and be clad with the habiliments of glory in the paradise of God—identity being the same, but with a new body. W. R. McEwen.

Milton, N. S.

THE ATTRACTION OF CALVARY.

In the realm of the intellect and of the soul, the law of physical gravitation has its analogies. What atoms are to atoms, and worlds to worlds, so is mind to mind and heart to heart. There is a universe of intellect, of feeling and of affection. A realm where thoughts, affections, purposes, yearnings, aspirations and wills, are the atoms and molecules. With matter the power of attraction is fixed and definite. No atom can change its potency; but the spirit has in itself possibilities to which the atom is a stranger. The mind may advance from feebleness to power, from obscurity to the prominence of a central orb. A man may go down to the grave leaving no perceptible mark upon the world's thought; or he may stretch across all continents and reach down all ages, and give current to the thought, and color to the lives of men to the latest hour of time. Homer and Virgil, Moses and Plato, David and Paul, swing about them the