

Messenger and Visitor

Published in the interests of the Baptist denomination of the Maritime Provinces by

The Maritime Baptist Publishing Co., Ltd.

TERMS: \$1.50 per annum in advance.

S. MCC. BLACK

Editor.

85 Germain Street, St. John, N. B.

Address all communications and make all payments to the MESSENGER AND VISITOR.

For further information see page nine.

Printed by Paterson & Co., 107 Germain Street, St. John, N. B.

"Why Callest Thou Me Good."

It has been contended by a skeptical criticism that the words of Jesus recorded in Mark 10:18 and in Luke 18:19 imply on the part of the speaker a sense of moral imperfection, and are therefore inconsistent with the doctrine of his sinlessness. But such an interpretation is surely as unnecessary as it is inconsistent with the claims of Jesus to a Divine Sonship, his assertions of spiritual authority and the entire absence from the gospel narratives of anything which would indicate on his part a consciousness of guilt or any feeling of repentance toward God. There seems to be nothing clearer than that the evangelists believed that he concerning whom they wrote was wholly free from any sense of moral imperfection and absolutely unstained by sin. It is perhaps the most cardinal and irrefragable proof of the essential truth of those unique biographies that the story which they tell is so entirely in harmony with such a conception. Nothing is more evident than the simplicity of these narratives. What we have is not one narrative constructed with supremely subtle art with the purpose of setting forth the ideal of a faultless being, but several narratives set forth by men of simple minds and unpracticed pens with the common purpose of preserving as much as possible of the record of the words and deeds of one whose personality they were compelled to believe transcended all human limits. What we have is not a great artist's portrait of the Christ, but a series of photographs taken at many different moments and from many different points of view, yet, when studied separately and in relation to each other, giving an idea of a being so unique and transcendent in simplicity, in goodness and in spiritual authority, that no human artist could ever have imagined such an ideal and given it so incomparable expression.

It is a most remarkable fact that, in respect to their testimony concerning the moral character of Jesus, the evangelists should be so self-consistent and consistent with each other. They present him under many different lights, in many circumstances and in relation to the different classes of people with whom his constantly active ministry brought him into contact or into conflict. And yet, whether he walks by the way or sits in the house, whether he converses with his disciples only or preaches to the thronging multitudes, whether it is an hour of peace and calm or whether his soul is wrought upon by some tremendous spiritual emotion, whether he seeks to lead some friendly and honest inquirer into the light, or is face to face with the malignant bigotry and murderous hate of scribes and Pharisees, whether he is in the hands of friends or in the hands of enemies, whether it is in the house at Bethany or the last supper with his disciples, or whether it is the betrayal, the agony of Gethsemane, the ignominy and condemnation of Pilate's Judgment Hall and the final scene of the supreme tragedy,—yet through all and amid all, the evangelists neither by direct statement nor by implication attribute to him aught, in thought or word or deed, that does not go to confirm the apostolic declaration that he was "holy, undefiled and separate from sinners." Granted the Divine Sonship of Jesus and assume that the evangelists were, as they professed to be, men who sought to present a simple record of facts as they had known them or as they had received them from trustworthy eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses, and this picture of the sinless Christ is intelligible, but it is surely intelligible on no other supposition. Could

these men have imagined and painted the picture of this sinless and supreme Personality among the sons of men, whom more and more with the passing centuries the world is coming to recognize as the Son of God? But granted the sinlessness of Jesus Christ, and all is granted. For if the picture of Jesus Christ which we find in the gospels transcends human power then we can have no difficulty in believing that its original was more than human. Then belief in the incarnation and the resurrection become most reasonable, and the possession of miraculous power by the Lord or Life a thing to be expected.

But to return to these words of the Master spoken to the young ruler, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but One, that is God." Evidently the purpose of Jesus was gently to rebuke a manner of speech that did not sufficiently weigh the import of the most significant words, and at the same time to bring the eager questioner face to face with the profoundest verities. He seems to say to the young ruler, "You come eagerly to me, you call me 'Good Master.' You desire to be shown the way of eternal life. You are right in connecting goodness and life. For God who is the source of all life is the embodiment of all goodness. His commandments are good, they reflect his nature and declare his will, they therefore minister life. You have kept the commandments? Yes. And still you have not that full assurance of eternal life which you desire, and you have come to me for something which you could not find even in the holy law. Come, then, you have called me 'Good Master,' I will put your confession to the proof, and I will not put it to shame. Receive my command. Go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven, and come and follow me." Surely this was no shrinking back on the part of Jesus from the appellation GOOD as applied to himself. It was telling the young ruler that he had spoken more wisely, more truly, than he knew, and bidding him have the faith and courage to act upon the word that he had uttered, the confession that he had made, that in Jesus there was a revelation of God richer and more authoritative than was contained in the Mosaic commandments.

And these words of Jesus—WHY CALLEST THOU ME GOOD? have for men today a meaning as true and as important as they had for the young Jewish ruler. How many there are who call Christ GOOD, who never pause to ask themselves, with any searching analysis of mind and heart, what they mean by the appellation or consider seriously whether they are ready to accept the logical results which their professed attitude to Christ involves! Does one believe that Jesus Christ is in any unique and supreme sense the GOOD MASTER, then certainly there is nothing for him to do but accept His commands, however hard they may seem to be, there is no alternative for him but to become a follower of Jesus. If he were not worthy to be worshipped as Lord, He could never be the Saviour of men. Keep your fine speeches for sinful men who can be pleased with flattery. Jesus Christ does not ask for compliments but for the heart and the heart's truest homage. Still to a vacillating, half-hearted confession the response of Jesus is—"Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" Nothing is plainer in the gospel narratives than that Jesus sought from men that in the fullest and most absolute sense they should recognize and acknowledge Him as the Good Master. His authority is none the less absolute and compelling, because it is not the authority merely of supreme power, but the authority of SUPREME GOODNESS and INFINITE LOVE. Does any man dare to say that Jesus Christ was not good? And if he was good in any real sense, how can it be denied in the face of what the evangelists declare of Him that he was good in that supreme and divine sense which demands the utmost homage of the human heart?

Editorial Notes.

—The biography of the late Rev. James Chalmers who, a few months ago, met death at the hands of the natives of one of the cannibal islands of the southern seas, should be a book of remarkable interest. Mr. Chalmers was a man of noble and attractive personality and passed through many experiences similar to those related by the venerable John G. Paton in his famous autobiography. The life of Mr. Chalmers is shortly to be published by the Revells.

—The fact that Dr. Martin who, owing to reactionary influences in China, had been deposed from the presidency of the Peking University, has been invited by the distinguished Viceroy Chang Chi Tung to return to Peking is taken to indicate that the reform element is again gaining ground in China. Chang Chi Tung is the author of a book of liberal tendencies, which has had a large circulation in China, entitled *China's Only Hope*. Dr. Martin is a missionary of many years standing. He is intimately acquainted with Chinese affairs and deeply versed in Chinese learning, as his two very notable books entitled respectively, *A Cycle of Cathay* and *The Lore of Cathay*, abundantly testify.

—A note received from Mrs. Churchill dated at Bobbili, India, March 18, says, "Mr. Churchill is away on a long hard journey by ox-cart to the feverish, tiger-infested country of Jeypore, to interview the Maha Rajah, in regard to land at Rayagadda for a mission compound. Also to see if anything can be done to prevent him from taking the lands away from our Christians at Chekpegorda, which is determined on, by his Ameen at Rayagadda. We are all continuing in prayer here at Bobbili, for his safe return, and successful visit and interview with the Maha Rajah of Jeypore. Writing to him would be of no avail, seeing him in person was the only thing left to be done, so Mr. Churchill started on the 10th." Mrs. Churchill reported the heat at time of writing to be 99° in the shade.

—According to the statistical tables contained in the American Baptist Year Book for the current year, recently published by the American Baptist Publication Society, the number of Baptist churches in the United States is 44,453, a gain for the year of 494. The total membership is 4,269,063, a gain of 35,837. The baptisms for the year were 207,515, or 280 more than in the previous year, there were added by letter 101,213 and by experience 50,397. The losses were, by death 42,571, by letter 83,711 and by exclusion and erasure 83,711. The number of Sunday schools is 27,211 a gain of 2,011 and the number of scholars 1,843,463, a gain of 48,649. The value of church property increased during the year from \$88,146,386 to \$89,389,992. The contributions for church expenses, missions, etc., increased from \$13,790,299.63, in the preceding year, to \$14,138,195.28. The amount contributed for state missions was \$364,422.79 for home missions \$356,669.39, for foreign missions, \$462,402.92, for Bible and publication work \$53,519.81, for ministerial education \$210,637.91, and for miscellaneous purposes \$1,063,092.01. The amount contributed for church expenses was \$10,958,371.95 and for Sunday school expenses was \$548,007.48.

—The late Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage, who died Apr. 12, at the age of seventy, was a man of conspicuous, rather than of eminent, ability. In respect to popularity at least he was one of the great lights of the American pulpit. With the exception of Beecher, no American preacher, we suppose, has attracted larger congregations, and, without any exception, none has commanded a wider audience for his published discourses. Dr. Talmage's preaching was largely upon evangelical themes, it was graphic, ornate, eloquent, forceful and did not depart from the paths of traditional orthodoxy. But the impression of his preaching and of his ministry in general lacked much of that which belongs to the best preaching and the most influential ministry. In respect to qualities that make for popularity Talmage may be classed with such men as Spurgeon and Beecher and Brooks, but his impression upon the mind and conscience of his time was by no means such as theirs, and when hereafter the roll of the great preachers of the last half of the nineteenth century is called the name of Talmage will scarcely be found among them.

—It is interesting here to note some things which leading religious journals have to say of Dr. Talmage in connection with their notices of his decease. *The Outlook* says: "Dr. Talmage's most noticeable gift was his pictorial power; the intellectual element in his sermons was not marked, his spiritual insight was not profound and his ethical standards were seriously questioned. His sermons were singularly graphic in illustration, and their pictorial vividness secured for him wide hearing wherever he chose to speak."

The Independent speaks of Dr. Talmage as "the typical sensational preacher in America." "He possessed the merits and faults of his class. He was doubtless earnest in his faith and in his desire to bring men into the Christian life. He had unusual power of description, with a free control over both the humorous and pathetic elements of oratory. He could make people laugh and cry. By an infirmity of his mind, of which he took sufficient advantage, he was unable to see the value of the verities, and he felt under no obligation to investigate the truth of what he could use to effect in an address. He was brought to trial for falsehood and was successfully defended before his presbytery by Dr. Samuel T. Spear, then an editor of *The Independent*. He was a lovable, kindly, brilliant, irresponsible man who said many good things and doubtless did much miscellaneous good, but who left behind him no permanent influence of value."