

MAN AS A WORSHIPPER.

Man is undoubtedly a religious being. He will and must worship something outside of and greater than himself, in some form or in some way. What Paul said of the Athenians, whose gods were visibly imaged in statues throughout their city, might almost as strongly be spoken of all nations in every place; they are given to or very careful in matters of religion. And in their desire to reverence all that was divine in creation they would multiply their images of divine power, so that if any divine qualities were overlooked in one god they might be remembered and worshiped in the form of some other. The Greeks, in their mythology, were inclined to deify all nature. All the powers or forces of nature were the manifestation of some god or goddess. The storm, the sea, the mountain, the plain, the bubbling fountain, the varying winds, the changing seasons, night and day, each must have an appropriate god or goddess, or perhaps both, as presiding over and making themselves manifest through these different phenomena of creation. How strongly the educated Greek believed in these gods I do not attempt to discuss in this connection. They were an evidence of his capacity for worship and religion at least. And then, too, even among heathen nations lacking refinement the same capacity and desire was seen in the different religious systems or religious observances they had adopted. They were all feeling after God, if haply they might find Him, though had the soul been honest with itself God would not have been lost to it; for the Almighty had started the race with the knowledge of Himself as Creator, and the invisible things of Him were manifest from the works of creation, even His eternal power and godhead; wherefore they were without excuse, because that when men thus knew they 'did not retain this knowledge, they glorified Him not as God, as His works and providences might have taught them to do; neither were they thankful as He gave them food and rain and fruitful seasons. And as they would not retain the truth of Him in their knowledge they fell into idolatry. God gave them over to their reprobate mind to do those things that were not convenient. As they would not believe the truth they were given over to believe a lie, and fell to worshipping the creatures God had made instead of Him, their Creator, who was God over all. Thus, in their perversity they were made to illustrate the soul's deep need of God, and its desolate, weary wickedness in trying to live without Him. And it is so that God makes the wrath of man to praise Him. The fall of man into idolatry illustrates the crying need of the soul for God. Men may reject and have rejected Him. But they suffer loss in doing so, and labor in vain to supply that loss in worshipping some of the works of His hands. Professing to be wise they become fools. Unwilling to accept Him in His appointed way they pursued their own wilful way, and from the deep, unsatisfied hunger of the soul they were led to acknowledge their unhappiness and misery without Him. For the hunger and thirst of the soul was implanted there by its Maker, and can only be satisfied in Him. Forsaking Him, the fountain of living waters, the soul goes forth to hew out for itself cisterns; but they are broken cisterns that hold no water. Determined to go far from Him in its own way of life and pleasure, the soul of man will only spend its substance in riotous living, as a great prodigal from the Father's house. And when it has spent all, and its resources are almost exhausted, a great barrenness and desolation is felt, and a mighty famine arises in its history, and it begins to be in want. It cries aloud in its sense of weakness and insufficiency. And when all experiments and labors end in failure, it is ready for a revelation of love and mercy from the Divine Father. And then, as it comes to itself, its true

life's lesson is learned, and it knows that only with Him is there bread enough and to spare, while without Him, it must perish in its hunger. And all this is clearly verified in man's religious history, both before and since the coming of the world's Redeemer.

It is a strange thing that men will profit so little from their most tragic experiences. Even now we are confronted with the same truth of men's propensity for worship. If they persistently reject the truth, then, like a vessel loosed from its moorings, they are adrift, without anchor or compass. And they are ready to repeat the same doleful experience that the race was ending so disastrously when Divine mercy came to the rescue. Even God's favored nation was not able to withstand the temptation of a false worship. And when His law and glory were ignored by His people, they were at the mercy of every form of error, and were readily ensnared with the lowest and most debasing systems of false religion. They were tempted and they fell through disobedience, enacting over again the tragedy of Adam and Eve in Eden, and of Cain in his offering. They worshipped the golden calf at Sinai, they passed their children through the fire to Moloch, they burnt incense to Baal, and forsook the Lord to follow Baal and Ashtaroth, they built altars and made groves and consecrated high places and were ready to worship the host of heaven. And by such means they sought to supply the want of the soul when they forsook God and His truth and their only sufficient portion. And the temptation to false worship is one of the devil's methods of gaining the soul's allegiance to himself, for the sin of forsaking God can be so aptly disguised under the name and form of worship. Thus he comes in the garb of religion seeking to deceive the very elect. Such was his last and greatest temptation to Christ in the wilderness. And Christ's reply is the true and only safeguard for man. It is written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." And to man, the Lord God is revealed in Christ, and He only is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no man can come unto the Father but by Him. And they are the true "circumcision" who worship by the spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. (Phil. iii. 3, R. V.)

More anon.

WM. A. WATKINS.

"FAITH."

When God tempted Abraham to take Isaac his only and beloved son into the land of Moriah, there to offer him up as burnt offering, he did not consult the Lord why he should do so, neither did he consult his wife or his feelings—but did what the Lord commanded him. Taking Isaac and his two servants and the wood for a burnt offering, they came to the place after a three days journey. Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come again to you.

Many, no doubt, would have consulted the Lord before taking the journey and would have asked many questions, why they should do such a thing as to slay their only son and offer him up as a burnt offering; and would have said, Did'st thou not make a covenant with me? Did'st thou not promise that in me all families of the earth should be blessed? How can this thing be if I offer up Isaac as a burnt offering? Then feelings would have taken the place of obedience, and God would have been displeased with them. But not so with faithful Abraham, he did just as he was commanded, nothing more, nothing less. After the third day's journey they saw the place afar off. Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son; he took the fire in his hand and a knife, and they went both of them together. Isaac

begins to question his father about the burnt offering, not seeing any lamb for the occasion, and said unto his father: "Behold the fire and the wood!" No doubt Isaac had seen his father offering burnt offerings before, but this time there was no lamb, and inquires of the father where was the lamb for a burnt offering? What is the answer to the question? My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering. Now they have come to the place that God told them of; and Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar upon the wood. Everything seems silent as the grave, not a whisper is heard. Abraham stretches forth his hand and takes the knife and is ready to strike the fatal blow when the silence is broken, and the voice of the angel is heard in the distance. Abraham! Abraham! and the voice of Abraham is heard in account low. "Here am I. And the angel says: Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son, from Me." Was there a substitute found for a burnt offering in place of Isaac? There was! As Abraham looked behind him he saw a ram caught on a thicket by his horns and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. Well might Abraham be called the father of the faithful. Where shall we look for greater faith than was found in Abraham? And on account of his faith and obedience to the Lord's commands the angel calls to him out of heaven the second time, and said: "By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice." Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Just such faith as Abraham had do men require in this our day. Without faith it is impossible to please God. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith.

W. J. MESSERVEY.

"EASTERN LIGHT."

Soon after God had completed His creation by making man in "His own image and after His likeness," "He planted a garden eastward in Eden." Gen. ii. 8. The exact location of this garden is not now known. Several fine locations have been pointed out by able writers, but all is conjecture. The ravages of time and the undulation of the flood have put it past the power of man to locate it. This is the first idea—that the east was a sacred point of compass. After Cain had murdered his brother Abel, God gave him a sore reproof, and his sentence; he went out from the presence of God and travelled to the land of Nod, east of Eden.

When Jacob was travelling from Bethel to Haran he slept in the wilderness and had a remarkable dream. See Gen. 28th and 29th chapters. And as he pursued his journey he came to the people of the east—his own relatives.

Leaving the "Old Testament," we find in Matt. ii. 1 and 2, wise men from the east; but Luke gives a more full account of this wonderful transaction, so full of cheer to us of the west. Luke ii. 8 to 21. Those wise men from the east had seen angels and His star, the star of Bethlehem, which directed the wise men to the infant Saviour.

An interesting use of the word east will be found in regard to the tabernacle, the pattern of which