

The Home Mission Journal.

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This Bible as Literature and Much More.

ROBERT STUART MACARTHUR.

XVIII

(Continued from last issue)

Remarkable Reticence.

One cannot study this book without discovering its remarkable reticence. It gives at once the impression of self-restraint, of cautious strength, of assured conviction, of absolute knowledge, and of great reserve power. It is practical in its purpose, and its methods are distinctively and emphatically practical. It deals with the greatest subjects, and it starts to the loftiest heights. But it never for a moment loses its poise, never descends its purpose never hesitates in its onward sweep. The unity of its various parts in this regard is truly marvellous. Written during a period of nearly or quite seventeen centuries, written by men differing so completely in education, in social life, and in religious attainment, it is truly wonderful that it should so completely preserve one character. Each man wrote with the utmost spontaneity, and yet all the writers were so controlled as to secure certain great ends, preserving unity in purpose with diversity of method. In this particular is clearly shown the superintending Spirit of God. Each writer wrote along his own lines, developing his own peculiarities, and yet the writings of all conducted to one great end. The purpose of the Bible is eminently practical, as opposed to what is merely theoretical or speculative. No writers of any other literature had so many temptations to indulge in speculative discussion as had the writers of the Bible; but they resolutely continue to impress practical and personal duties, and not to gratify mere curiosity. The Bible deals with the greatest of all conceivable subjects. It projects its lofty and solemn thought into eternity. It touches the deepest springs of human motives, and it appeals to the highest inspirations of human life. It has its time of solemn introspection, it has its moments of holy prospect; it discusses the miseries of man, and the mercies of God. But the practical element is never forgotten; it is always emphasized with much of pathos and argument. The most exalted doctrine is solemnly presented in its close relation to daily duty.

These affirmations are finely illustrated in all which the Bible tells us of God, in his immaculate holiness, in his infinite perfections, in his eternal existence. All these great truths are presented, not as subjects of speculation, but in their relation to the practical duties of life here and now. A similar remark applies with literality to all the revelations of heaven given in this blessed book. A door is occasionally opened in heaven to our wondering and admiring eyes, and the glory of the redeemed seems to stream through this open door. Strains from the unseen choirs beyond greet our listening ears. We often wish that the Bible had told us more of that land which is so far off and yet often seems so near. Why should the statements of the Bible regarding heaven be for the most part negative rather than positive? We may, however, be absolutely certain that there is as much of divine wisdom and love in the silence as there would be in a fuller revelation. Why do we know so little regarding angels; beings? What is their nature? What

are their employments? Why does not the Bible gratify our speculative tendencies? The danger is that even the Church would neglect practical duty while it indulges in unwarranted speculations. The angels rebuked the disciples who saw Jesus ascend, because they stood gazing up into heaven, to the neglect of the testimony which longing hearts so much needed. A similar rebuke angels and preachers ought now to give to some Christians who neglect daily service for men, while they stand gazing up into heaven waiting for the return of the Lord. There is entire certainty that when the seal of silence is not broken in the Bible, the silence is not only silver, but gilded for all disciples of Christ.

This Principle Illustrated.

The Bible is strangely silent regarding the place of the burial of Moses. We may well be sure that there was entire wisdom in the selection of the place of that august burial. Moses did not live for himself, but for his people. He was to see the goodly land, but was not himself to enter it. Marvellous is the charm which the Bible throws upon his last view of the goodly land from Mount Pisgab. Yonder, west of the Jordan, lay that land; but a more glorious land is soon to be the home of God's servant and Israel's leader. There in the land of Moab he died. Here in some ravine by Beth-Peor he was buried; "but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Legend has supplied what revelation did not furnish; tradition has told of the tears of the people and wailing of the children as they turned from the familiar scenes. It tells us how Moses died from the kiss of God. But regarding all these things the Bible is judiciously silent. No doubt undue reverence would have been given the grave of Moses had its location been definitely known.

The New Testament manifests a similar reticence in regard to Christ. We do not know with absolute certainty the day of the month, the month of the year, nor the year of the world in which Christ was born. Scholars in different ages and countries have selected almost every one of the days of the year as the day of his birth. It is almost certain that it was not the 25th of December, and it is quite certain that we are four or five years behind the proper year of his birth; so that this present year ought to be at least 1903 of the Christian era. There is a strong tendency in human nature toward giving undue honor to times and seasons. Religious festivals not appointed by God, often receive a devotion denied God's holy day. There are many who would shrink back with horror from certain acts if committed on Good Friday, which they will commit on the Lord's day without the slightest compunction of conscience.

It is deeply interesting also to observe the reticence of the Bible regarding the youth of Christ. From the time that he appears in the temple at twelve years of age, to the time when he enters upon his public ministry at thirty, there is but one hint, one glimpse, one echo, concerning the eighteen years of lowly life, of patient service, and of holy discipleship in the obscure village of Nazareth. When we contrast the reticence of the inspired gospels in this regard with the garrulous trivialities found in the so-called gospels of the infancy, we have a striking illustration of the superiority of the gospels as given by holy men inspired of God to write the history of Christ. One needs no stronger argument than the comparison between the genuine and the pseudo-gospels, as to the value of inspiration. In these pseudo-gospels we have prolonged accounts of the freaks of divine power which it is claimed Jesus manifested. We are told that he made mud images, spoke to them a word of power, and they became living boys and girls. We are told that when engaged with Joseph the carpenter, his reputed father, in erecting houses, he touched with his hand beams that were too short, and they became of the required length. One turns away with disgust from the ridiculous descriptions contained in the gospels written by men uninspired of God. The

profound silence falling upon this period of Christ's life rebukes by anticipation the tendency toward the practice of Mariolatry. There is not the slightest doubt but that in the Roman Church to day the Virgin Mary often receives a degree of homage denied the Son of God. There is not one word in Holy Scripture to justify such homage; and there are records of positive rebukes which Christ administered to his mother both before and after entering on his public ministry.

(To be Continued.)

A Promise for 1900.

"My presence will go with thee, and I will give thee rest."—Ex. 33:14.

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give you rest."—We journey from the rising sun to its setting in the west, And sometimes are the blue skies bright, and sometimes days are drear. But ever stands that promise fast, our safeguard for the year.

For who would dread the darkened path, if one he loved were near?

Or, with a Pilot sure and tried the stormy waters fear: Oh! for the melting of the veil, the earth-born cares we weave. Oh! for the glimpse which faith can give of Him whom we believe.

For this let prayer go up, it means the trouble stilled, As when the sobbing babe with peace in mother's arms is filled, It may not quite forget the pain, a sob may sometimes break. But oh! the shelter of those arms—a very heaven they make!

The everlasting arms of God—they open wide for us. The everlasting peace is there—for those who shelter thus; And clinging closer for the pain, look up and see His face, B-hold the sunshine of His love, the wonders of His grace.

And since with promise or behest comes power to obey, Let us stretch out the hand of faith to grasp the word to-day, And passing through the New Year gates, step smiling towards the west, For Thy "presence shall go with us," and Thou, "wilt give us rest."

—Northwest Baptist.

Within The Lines.

Reminiscences of The Civil War.

By MRS. M. M. HUNTINGTON.

II.

Another little boy had gladdened our household, and we were trying to be busy and hopeful, trusting and believing that the end would soon come and bring peace to the country, but in the fall the blockade was so secure that comparatively few even tried to go North, and we had decided to stay and make the best of what came, cheered by some good friends who help to make life endurable; but how dreadful it was is beyond description. We could now seldom hear from our old home friends; we could never for a moment count on the success of any project; all was doubt and uncertainty. We had brought a large place two miles from the business portion of the city, containing new buildings and a large unimproved front yard, where my husband busied himself out of office hours in beautifying the grounds with shrubs, trees and flowers. Frequently he would stop and say, "Why should I do this when I do not know what another year will bring forth!" But it served to pass away the dreary hours of suspense.

The spring of 1863 was particularly trying, money had depreciated and everything to eat, drink and wear had become scarce, yet of necessities we had enough. We went without luxuries. I once paid \$60 for a pair of shoes; steak was from \$5 to \$10 per pound, and sugar \$10 per pound. But these were not the troubles that wore upon us. We had not heard from