

THE DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN

THE LORD OF LIFE.

By Professor James Stalker, D.D.
Our four specimens of our Lord's ministry of miracle, bringing to a close, for the present, the examples accumulated by this Evangelist's method of grouping the acts of the Messiah. In order to bring the four under a single point of view, we should require to think of them as illustrations of such a text as, "I am the life," or "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." From the inexhaustible fountain of his virtues we see streaming to one life, to another sight, to a third hearing, and so on.

Christ and the Home.—The man who required the assistance of the Lord in this case was "a ruler"—that is to say, a ruler of the synagogue. Not many of this class were to be found amongst those who acknowledged indebtedness to the Saviour. But this man was driven to Christ by imperative necessity, the illness of his little daughter, who was the apple of his eye and the light of his home. By his affection he was released from the prejudices of his class, and by the sharp agony of bereavement obliged to go where his steps were not otherwise likely to be bent. Thus does domestic sorrow often furnish errands to the Saviour; the danger of one beloved forces the reluctant to their knees; and surely domestic sorrow that leads to God is better than the greatest immunity from misfortune without him. The delicate appreciation for the domestic sanctities felt by Jesus was manifested by his driving all forth except those most entitled to be there, before he advanced into the sanctuary of maiden purity; and one cannot but believe that he disliked the conventional grief of the hired mourners, whose wailing was so ready to turn into loud laughter, unseemly in the abode of death. This is the only case of raising the dead detailed by this Evangelist; and there have been those who have denied that this was a case of raising the dead at all, accepting the words, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth," literally. But this takes all the poetry out of these words and out of the scene. The intention of the Evangelist can hardly be mistaken. Besides, the other scenes of the same kind in the record have to be borne in mind. The mood of minimizing everything done by him and, wherever possible, taking it in a non-miraculous sense is certainly not according to the spirit of any of the Evangelists.

A Miracle within a Miracle.—Mighty, however, as was the miracle performed on the ruler's daughter, it is exceeded in interest by another which took place on the way to the ruler's house. The delay may have tried the patience of the ruler, but the remarkable issue must have strengthened his faith. These two miracles stand related to each other as picture and frame; and the one which is thus the picture is certainly one of the gems of the evangelical record. It is an example of how Jesus trimmed the lamp of faith. At first the faith of the woman was not only small but so mixed with superstition that Jesus might have been expected to rebuke instead of praising it. The hem of his garment was a mark worn by every Jew in token of his connection with the holy people; and the woman may have thought that there was something sacred in this part of his clothing. She intended to steal the blessing, supposing that she might be cured by contact with his raiment, without his being aware of it. But virtue does not so easily go out of the Saviour. He was conscious that that faint and trembling touch was different from the rude contact of the many who were thronging him; and the scene is an everlasting reminder of the difference between thronging and touching. When the multitude throng to the church or the communion table, only those derive real benefit who are in the Spirit and are in quest not of the ordinance but the Saviour. A single word of real prayer can touch him through all the distance between earth and heaven. The woman would have escaped among the crowd; but, if Jesus had allowed her to do so, she would have missed the best of the blessing. By being called back, she was introduced to her Benefactor face to face and made one of his confessor.

Unauthorized Confession.—The variety in the operations of Jesus is shown by the contrast between his thus summoning forth a reluctant confessor in one case and his repression of too exuberant confession in the next miracle. Indeed, the whole behavior of Jesus in the latter case suggests that he divined something false in the two blind men. They were too loud in appealing to him; and so he did not respond till they had followed him into the house. Then he questioned them sharply whether they really believed in him; and, when they were cured, he charged them roughly, as the word implies, not to make him known. Still they at once went on and did it. Much, as the Saviour prizes confession, he severely suppresses it in certain cases, because it is dangerous to certain natures. These men seem to have been thinking more of their own importance than of his honor and glory; and this is the test: confession must be distasteful to him when those who make it are magnifying themselves instead of him.

The Praising Multitude.—The concluding number of this series of miracles evoked a remarkable outburst of praise to God on the part of those who witnessed it, though there is nothing very remarkable in the written account. Both it and the preceding miracle are narrated by the First Evangelist alone; and their preservation may be due to the fact that they happened so soon after his call and came under his personal observation. There is in us all sometimes a dumb devil of silliness, which requires to be exorcised; and there is also a silence from witness-bearing which requires to be counteracted by a deeper sense of redeeming love.

SPARKS FROM OTHER ANVILS.

Canadian Baptist: The teaching of Jesus was always directed to the securing of conduct—"do ye even so to them." This is not a gospel of works, it is a gospel of grace, for the gospel of grace is that which ever manifests itself in gracious conduct. But there are a great many of our difficulties that entirely vanish when we do what Jesus tells us. He who will follow the guidance of this lamp will ever find that somehow his steps will discover the right path, as he keeps moving forward. The only difficulty lies in converting this into a working principle in our actual life.

Cumberland Presbyterian: The Roman Catholics complain that the Methodists in Rome "take every advantage of the poverty of the poor of Rome" but the facts seem to be that these Protestant workers bring real light and help to an ignorant and poverty-stricken people who are denied both light and help from the Roman Catholic church. These poor people find something in Protestant Christianity that they do not find in the Roman church. The incident is an interesting sidelight on the whole question of missions in papal lands.

The child who knows the Father should live in glad thanksgiving,
Should keep a Sabbath always—a festival of praise,
And sing as do the angels for very joy of living,
For all the unasked blessings with which God crowns our days.

However rich we may once have been in earthly love, and however poor we may be to-day, we may be a hundred times richer if only the heart is open for the entrance of the Infinite and Living Love. No alienation, no estrangement, no bereavement can leave us poor if we but know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.—Robertson Nicoll.

"I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to bear."

CHRIST THE TEACHER.*

By Robert E. Speer.

One of the words by which Christ was constantly described or addressed was the word "Teacher." Often in our old versions of the Bible the word is translated "Master," but literally it is "Teacher." This was the aspect of Jesus' mission which most impressed people at the beginning of his ministry. He seemed to them to be a wonderful new teacher, so fresh, so true, so authoritative, so sincere, so practical. All the world through which he walked served to suggest lessons, and even the simplest and lowest-witted among the people could understand him. So they crowded to him and followed him about, listening eagerly to his wonderful parables and the lessons which went straight to their hearts and fitted their everyday lives.

For this eternal freshness of the teaching of Jesus is one of its wonderful characteristics. Thousands of teachers have come and gone since he was here and only those of them are remembered who have interpreted more clearly his teaching or have discovered some truth which supported him. We are each of us finding principles in them that we had not been before fitting to new conditions of our own day. Other teaching grows old. It was tied up to one age and passed with its age. But Christ's teaching is immortal.

The greatest of all his lessons was his teaching about God. The world never knew what he told it about God. It has never fully believed it, but it is coming to believe it more and more. He lived himself in the peace and strength of an absolute trust in the fatherly love of God. All the evil of the world which he knew better than any one else who has ever come in the world and which was the constant anguish of his soul, could not shake his confidence in God's fatherly government of the world. We can learn no greater lesson from his teaching than this trust in God the Father.

But Jesus did not teach this lesson by the words which he spoke alone. You must put new truth into life to make it apprehensible. Jesus did this. At first men thought of him only as a teacher, but soon they saw his miracles which did indeed illustrate his doctrine, but which also showed that he was not like other teachers. And as time went on his disciples realized that the great lesson was not what he said but what he was and was doing. They saw that he was indeed teaching them the principles of the true life, but they saw also that he was doing something for man. He was himself by his life and death making it possible for them to live this life by means of a divine life which he would be in them, as they could never live it by simply trying in their own will to imitate his counsels. The Teacher was also the Son of man and Son of God. If he had not been, his teaching might not have been forgotten, but if remembered it would have had no more transforming force in its measure than the teachings of Confucius or Buddha.

Stalker's "Imago Christi" will help us to realize what lessons Jesus teaches by his character and ways with men. Jenks' "The Social Teaching of Jesus" will show us his teachings about social duty and relations, and Wendt's "Teaching of Jesus" will help those who wish to study more deeply his teaching about God and men and all things.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

Mon.—A lesson on the Kingdom (Matt. 5: 1-12).
Tues.—On righteousness (Matt. 5:20-30).
Wed.—On prayer (Matt. 6:5-15).
Thurs.—On fear-thought (Matt. 6: 25-34).
Fri.—On service (John 13:1-17).
Sat.—On obedience (John 14:15-24).

*Y. P. Topic, Sunday, April 3, 1910—Christ Our Teacher, John 13:44-50.