

Messenger and Visitor

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THE BEST EVIDENCE.

The evidences of Christianity are many and conclusive. No fair minded man can examine them and not be convinced of their irresistible force, but among these evidences none appeals more powerfully to the reason of every man than the change wrought in bad men's lives by receiving 'the truth as it is in Jesus' in their hearts.

Argument may be met by arguments, the claims of the Bible as superior to the works of Confucius or Plato or Buddha may be denied; men may deceive themselves with the idea that they have met and vanquished those who have held to the historic basis of the Christian faith. But the argument of a changed life is too much for them, they cannot answer it.

Here for example is a man notoriously bad. He is known in the community as a profligate, brutal, profane, man, coarse and foul in speech. By some means a word of warning or entreaty falls upon his ear. The truth smites his hard and flinty heart with great force. He may be as ignorant as a child over the simplest teachings of theology, but in an instant he sees, what he never saw before, that he is a lost sinner, resting under the condemnation of an offended God. He strives, perhaps to throw off the impression, but it clings to him and after a struggle more or less prolonged light breaks upon his soul, he feels his sins forgiven, and finds peace and joy in believing in Jesus. Now, if this were all, it might be said, this is only a matter of temporary emotion, it is simply a delusion and will soon pass away. It would be a singular experience for a careless and hardened soul if this were all, but it is not all, the man has met with a change—old things have passed away and all things have become new to him. He who was rude, vulgar, rough and unclean, has become gentle tender and pure in speech, the things in which he formerly delighted, he now abhors. The blasphemer has become a humble worshipper. The change marked and wonderful; and it proves to be a permanent one.

Such transformations as these are not few nor far between. Examples will be found wherever the gospel is faithfully and lovingly preached. They will stand the test of the most microscopic scrutiny. The contrast between the convicted man's past and present life is sharp and well defined. Christ said, "ye shall know them by their fruits;" and here is the very fruit the Bible assures us we may expect as the product of a renewed heart.

This living testimony to the truth of Christianity is of inestimable value, for the reason that it may be appealed to by the humblest and most unlettered disciple of Jesus. He may not know anything at all about the learned controversies of the scholars of the past or present. He may never have heard of Renan or Strauss or Colenso, but he can tell what the Lord has done for his own soul and for the souls of men once sunk deep in the muck of transgressions, but now standing firmly on the Rock Christ Jesus. The song he can sing is indeed a new song—a song of redeeming grace and dying love, and this living witness to the truth no man can gainsay. Indeed, it is because the religion of Christ is not a mere theory but a principle of life, a transforming power, that it is able to withstand all the assaults of wicked men that are made upon its defences as the years come and go. So long as the gospel has the power to make bad men good, so long will it continue to be the best evidence of Christianity known to men.

THE MIND OF CHRIST.

This is the Christian's goal. It is to be sought. There is no real growth and strength without it. Everybody admits that the possessions of the Lord's spirit is the sign and mark of true discipleship, but almost everybody confesses that spirit does not possess him. Many a man is very orthodox in his creed, sound in his theories of the atonement, his views of baptism and the relation of this ordinance to the Lord's Supper. He can argue by the hour on predestination and free-will. He knows, or thinks he knows, the difference between the 'peace of God' and 'the peace from God.' He is certain that the world is getting worse and worse and will continue to do so until Jesus comes to set

up his Kingdom on the earth, and that, to this end he may come at any moment. We hear all this, and more of the same sort. Orthodox! he may be, if the above be orthodoxy; and yet we find him vary heterodox in his life, uncharitable in his judgments of others. To those differing from him motives are assigned which exist only in his own perverted imagination. He has not a good word for the worth or the work of the brother who does not see as he sees. This spirit is abroad, it is not confined to one class, but it is in all classes. We hear men speak of judging righteous judgment, as if they alone possessed the capacity to do this. This is one of the most difficult things that the Christian can do. When we have come to the place when we can credit the man who differs from us, and whom we may dislike, with the virtues which he may really possess, we have journeyed along the King's highway to some purpose. When we can talk about such a man, without depreciating his character or misrepresenting his work, the grace of God has been doing its best work in us.

This is only one of many illustrations. There is kindness, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and many other characteristics of which the same thing might be affirmed.—We talk of these virtues and commend them for their beauty and Christlikeness, but there is very little striving to make them our own. The worldly man sees this, and notes the difference between what is and what ought to be. He hears the bitter word, the unkind criticism; he sees the sharp bargain, the suppressed fact, and the unforgiving spirit. He hears and sees it all, and asks what better is he as a Christian than I who cannot call myself by that name? We may say what we like as to the folly of such a conclusion, but the fact remains all the same. The Christian man must be a better man than the non-Christian, if he is to make his life tell among his fellows. 'Let this mind be, in you which was also in Christ Jesus.'

BAPTISTS IN MEXICO.

The second annual session of the National Baptist Convention of the republic of Mexico was recently held in the city of Torrenco Coahuila, there were 53 churches represented by about 60 messengers. Baptist work in Mexico is carried on under the auspices of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Home Mission Society. The two boards are working most harmoniously in their respective fields. In this convention the missionaries of these two boards have been brought together for the first time. The object sought is to unite Baptist workers throughout the republic in missionary and educational work, increase the spirit of fraternity, and to devise better ways and means for the evangelization of Mexico. From the reports of the secretary we learn that there are about 2000 church members in 53 churches, the number of baptisms last year was 1103, the value of church property is \$238,000, and of school property \$39,000, there are seven day schools with an enrolment of about 900 students. There are nearly 3000 Sunday school scholars in Baptist Sunday schools, this is the day of small things for Baptists in Mexico, but foundations are being laid, and the gospel is doing its beneficent work among the people, the results will be seen in due time. The population of the republic in round numbers is 14,000,000. The sessions of the Convention were most interesting, the progress of the work very encouraging, and the outlook most hopeful. The workers were all animated by the one spirit of pressing the work as vigorously as men and means would permit. Mexico is rapidly emerging from the dark night which enshrouded her people for three centuries. The country is open as never before. A network of railroads in every direction is bringing the fields closer together. The great need for reinforcements in men and money was repeatedly emphasized. Much attention has been given to work among the children and Sunday schools have been established wherever possible.

The young people have not been neglected. At this Convention a Baptist Young People's Union was organized embracing all the Baptist young people in the republic of Mexico. The question of Religious Literature received special consideration. Unfortunately there are but few safe religious books published in Spanish.

A paper is published bi-weekly called 'La Luz' edited by Rev. W. H. Sloan in the city of Mexico. Mr. Sloan has been in the country for the past 20 years and is regarded as the leader in the work. 'The field is the world' says the Master and Mexico affords a fine opportunity for the Baptists of the United States to cultivate this portion of the great world field.

FAILURE OR SUCCESS, WHICH?

Two acorns fall to the earth. One of them is eaten by a squirrel, the other takes root and becomes a great oak. Which of these acorns did its work? We are inclined to say the one that grew, rather than the one that was eaten. And so it would seem, but is this really so? Is not the feeding of a squirrel just as important in the divine economy, as the growing of an oak!

So too, we hear it said that some men have failed in life and others have succeeded, when the very opposite may have been the truth. Here is a young man starting out in

life with high resolves and lofty purposes, he will make a name for himself, but is compelled to stay on the farm and take care of his aged parents; a young lady of fine talents, who would shine in any society must stay at home and care for a widowed mother. The world writes failure over the lives of these two. But did they fail in their mission? Are not our lives under providential direction? Men see not the end from the beginning. "The life is more than meat and the body than raiment." If the judgment of man is correct then the life of Jesus was a conspicuous failure. He "trod the wine-press alone," He wore the crown of thorns, He carried the cross. But look farther, he who failed here, wears the crown of an immortal King. Despised and rejected here, crowned and honored there.

Failure is it? Not when weighed in the scales of "Eternal Righteousness." "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" is a law of life. It is the law of life at its highest and best. How shall we do our work? By accepting our lot and faithfully doing the tasks which are set before us day by day. Fill the place assigned, to the best of our ability, and at the last get the "well done," of the Master. This is success and no failure.

MY BOOK AND I.

At a Baptist Conference in Philadelphia a few weeks since Prof. Green gave an address on 'My Book and I,' in which among other good things he said, 'Carlyle divided books into two kinds. The sheep and the goats. To one class we may say come ye blessed of my Father, to the other we might say, depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, and if they only would, there would be more light from the book than we have ever seen. The book we should read ought to be mature. Coleridge said, Consider those books best which have matured into fame through the ages. Ruskin says, Read not the books of the hour, but the ages. My whole appeal with this world-mature is that we shall live with the Gods. Read the great books. It would take an eternity to read all the books that are open to us, but our three-score years and ten will be sufficient if we read at the fountain heads. The book we should read ought to be wholesome. The best way to drive out the bad is to introduce the good. The bad contents of the book cannot possibly enter the mind without being influenced by it. The book to read is the one that will show us the beauty of life. We do not need to read bad books to know the evil any more than we need to travel through a sewer in order to understand how a great city is drained of its refuse. The book we should read ought to be cheerful. The book that will make you feel worth living. If there is one command that is more to me than another it is that which came from the lips of the Master Himself, when he said 'Rejoice and be exceeding glad.' And so the kind of book to read is one that will make life brighter and happier. The book that will make you believe that every day is the brightest and that earth has no sorrow which heaven cannot heal. The book we should read ought to be varied. We ought to read poetry, it is the best interpreter of nature. Blessed be the poets who come to us with a revelation of nature's beauties. But I cannot enlarge on this feature, but we must have varied reading if we would have proper intellectual development. Our attitude toward the book ought to be receptive, desirous, imaginative, and determined. All these are necessary to understand and appreciate the message of your book.'

OUR CALLING.

The Bible puts this in a good many different ways, but they all mean substantially the same thing. Paul says in one place, 'Ye are called not to uncleanness but to holiness.' 'Ye are called to liberty,' 'Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye are called,' he says in another place, 'Eternal life, whereunto ye are called,' is found elsewhere. There are many other allusions, but all have the same significance. We are called to be 'imitators of God as dear children.' We greatly limit the meaning of salvation if we interpret it as many do, as being mainly to escape from penalty. It is that; but it is much more, and it is that, in order that it may be much more.

It includes both the negative element of deliverance from all evil, and the positive one of endowment with all good. And just as that from which Christ 'shall save his people' is mainly 'their sins' so that to which he shall save them is mainly 'the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth.' The supreme purpose of the Divine call is to re-create us in the likeness of Christ. In other words Jesus Christ died on the cross that all who believe in him might be good men. He came down from heaven, and went back to heaven, and died on the cross and lives in heaven, that we may conquer ourselves, put our foot upon the flesh, cut loose from the dependence upon the world, and be no longer servants of the devil. It is to this we are called, let us make our calling sure.

Editorial Notes.

—If you want to be useful and do good to the greatest number of people, there are two things to remember, "In matters of principle stand like a rock; in matters of taste