

Messenger and Visitor

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AN UNWARRANTED ASSUMPTION.

Our friend, the *Cassels*, expresses the opinion, that in order to be perfectly fair the Baptist Grande Ligne missionaries should give to their correspondents for distribution among the Roman Catholics of Quebec, a volume containing not only the King James Bible, but the books of Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiastics, Barnab and Macarabes, called by Protestants the Apocrypha, but accepted by Catholics as inspired Scripture; also the Epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Epistles of Clement, which writings were deemed by many excellent Christians part of Holy Writ, until the Council of Hippo, in the year 393 A. D. The Grand Ligne missionaries, the *Cassels* says, should distribute a volume containing all these writings and tell those who received them: "It is now your duty to study all these writings with the utmost care and in a prayerful spirit so that you may discern from the various impressions they make upon you whether they are the Word of God or not."

This statement appears to be founded on the assumption that the only evidence which Baptists recognize of the inspiration of the Biblical writings, is the impression which they make upon the individual reader. It seems unnecessary to say that the assumption is unfounded. The consensus of Protestant opinion that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, apart from certain so-called Apocryphal writings mentioned above, are in a special and unique sense inspired writings, is a consideration of the greatest weight with Baptists. Another consideration of vast importance as an argument in favor of the inspiration of these Scriptures, is their effect in the history of the world—the fact that wherever these Scriptures have been read "with utmost care and in a prayerful spirit," they have proved themselves to be a power to purify the hearts of men, to quicken their intelligence, to enoble their aspirations, to promote a sane and wholesome religious life and to give them the assurance of victory over death and all evil—a power far beyond that of any other literature which the world has seen. If then, in addition to these considerations, the Christian people of this generation—Baptist or other—feel themselves so inspired with appreciation of these Scriptures as to be convinced that they can be satisfactorily explained only on the supposition that the writers of them apprehended the very thought of God, they may surely in all sincerity and confidence commend them to others as "sacred scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." We cannot see that the Grande Ligne missionaries are under any obligation, on the score of consistency to furnish those to whom they minister with certain apocryphal writings which the missionaries do not regard as inspired scriptures any more than they are under obligation to furnish a vast deal of other literature, which may have been thought by some persons to be equal if not superior to that of the Bible.

The *Cassels* presumes that Baptists "cannot think of imposing by their authority, a canon of Scripture on earnest seekers after truth; for this would be indeed what they call a man-made religion." We believe that our contemporary is quite right. The Grande Ligne missionaries, we take it, will not seek to prevent anyone reading the apocryphal writings and getting what good they can out of them, though it may be expected that they will strongly counsel that the books which have been generally accepted as inspired by Protestant Christians shall receive first and chief attention. On the other hand we take it that if some one, after careful and prayerful study of a Scripture which Baptists generally regard as inspired, shall feel himself unable as Martin Luther did in certain instances, to appreciate it as such, that fact will not be sufficient to cause him to be thrust out from all Christian fellowship and consigned to the portion of hypocrites and unbelievers.

The *Cassels* advises that Baptists should address their efforts to the instruction of certain persons who do not accept so much of the Bible as inspired as Baptists do, and not "worry themselves about French-Canadian or any other Catholics who accept the Bible in its entirety." Now

it seems to us that it is better for one to accept one book of the Bible with a profound personal conviction of its being the truth of God than to accept the whole Bible from cover to cover on the declaration of a priest, a pope or a council, without any element of personal conviction in the matter and without any spiritual apprehension of its truth. If the Roman Catholic ecclesiastics in Quebec will give the people of that province the Bible to read in a correct translation, and will teach them to read and to understand it without other purpose than to convey the real teaching of the Word; if they will, teach their people to live such lives of simple faith and obedience to the gospel as the Apostles taught the people of their times, if they will cease from all teachings which have no support in the Word of God and will put away all ceremonies, rites and usages which are foreign to the spirit of Christianity as revealed in the New Testament, then we are sure the Baptists of Canada will heartily rejoice and will gladly turn their hands to some other work than that for which the Grande Ligne mission now stands.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND CANVASS.

As will be seen by what appears elsewhere in this paper, arrangements have been made for pushing to completion the work of the Twentieth Century Fund. Rev. H. F. Adams has, doubtless at some personal sacrifice, resigned his pastoral charge at Yarmouth to enter upon this work, and the church also deserves much credit for releasing its pastor from his engagements, in the interests of the denomination. It seems to us a mistake that arrangements were not made to retain Bro. Adams in this service when he was so successfully engaged in it last year. However it is bootless to cry over spilt milk or lost time. Mr. Adams has been engaged again and he will give his strength to it, and doubtless with gratifying results. Rev. A. J. Vining has come to assist in the canvass for a few weeks. Both are strong platform men and we may not be sure that the appeal as presented by them will lack strength and effectiveness. As was shown in the report of the Twentieth Century Fund committee presented to Convention, it is necessary to obtain \$10,000 yet in pledges to complete the fund of \$50,000. Many of the churches which were visited last year responded nobly to the appeal for this thankoffering in the interests of our home and foreign work. Some did even more than was expected of them, and we cannot doubt that the churches yet to be visited will manifest the same warm practical interest in the cause of world-wide evangelization as their sister churches have done. Pastors and leading members in the churches can do much to encourage Mr. Adams and Mr. Vining and to render the canvass successful. This, we cannot doubt, they will gladly do, and we hope that a few months of earnest effort will see the good work brought to completion.

LESSONS FROM THE WORD.

What are the chief lessons to be gathered from the passage of Scripture which will afford the subject for study in our Bible schools, next Sunday? Several points which are suggested or definitely set forth in the passage are well worthy of consideration. If we take into our view the preceding context, we perceive that even a prophet might find it necessary to recall words spoken in all sincerity. When Nathan learned that David purposed to build a sanctuary to the Lord at Jerusalem, he at first warmly approved the King's purpose. But afterwards there came to him what he felt convinced was a sure word of the Lord in regard to this matter, causing him to reverse his former judgment and to inform the king that his purpose to build a temple to the Lord could not receive the divine approval. There is, if we mistake not, an important lesson just here. The sincere judgments of good men frequently need to be revised. We sometimes honestly conclude that some proposed course of action deserves our approval, but when we have well reconsidered the matter in the light gained by meditation and prayer, we perceive quite clearly that the thing which we have been so strongly inclined to approve is not of the Lord. It is wise in every important movement in life to look for and expect the assurance that the thing proposed is right in God's sight as well as in the view of man, for the Divine voice is heard today by those who have ears to hear as really as it was by prophets of old.

Another lesson is that the manifestation of God's presence and the impartation of the divine blessing are independent of a grand and costly sanctuary. God can dwell in a tent as well as in a temple. He can manifest His presence and bestow His blessings in the humblest chapel as well as in the most stately church. There was here a foregleam of the truth as to the mode of the divine manifestation more clearly set forth by later prophets. The day had not yet come for the declaration of the luminous truth that God dwells not in temples made with hands, but the morning of that day was dawning in Israel, and more and more clearly it was to be understood that the only real dwelling place of God on earth was the heart of the humble and sincere worshipper. And still even at this day the lesson seems to have been very imperfectly learned, and men still cherish the delusion that places called chapels, churches and cathedrals, which have been consecrated by

priestly ceremonies, thereby become sanctuaries where the Divine presence is peculiarly manifested, not understanding that the only condition of the manifestation of the divine presence is the presence of those who worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

But the principal lesson of the passage, as it seems to us, is a lesson of humility and of man's absolute dependence upon God. In this respect it is like the lesson of last week. A man who has risen from small beginnings to a position of wealth and power is not unlikely to have an exaggerated opinion of his own importance. He has torn down and built up, has proved his ability and achieved success in many undertakings, until he feels himself sufficient to take everything, including religion and its ordinances, under his patronage. David had had what men would call a wonderful career. He had shown himself a brave soldier, a commander of rare ability, a great leader of men. He had found Israel a congeries of disunited and discouraged tribes, harried and oppressed by their enemies; and now Israel was a comparatively compact and powerful nation, feared of her enemies and enjoying an increasing prosperity. He had come upon the scene of conflict as a shepherd boy, now he was the undisputed king of Israel, the darling of his people, and representing the dominant power between Euphrates and the sea. Perhaps it was quite natural that David should have come to feel that he could do something for the Lord, by bringing up the sacred ark to Jerusalem and building a magnificent temple in which the symbol of the divine presence should be enthroned. Thus he would take the national religion under his guardianship and give it a more influential place in Israel than it had hitherto occupied. There may have been another reason for David's desire to build a temple to the Lord in Jerusalem. He may have thought that so costly an act of piety would be an appropriate expression of repentance in view of certain grievous sins into which he had fallen, and would be accepted as in some measure an atonement for his offences. However this may be, David evidently needed at this time to be reminded that it was not his hand, but an infinitely stronger, that was at the helm of affairs, and that whatever measure of greatness he enjoyed at the present, and whatever good might come to him and to his in the future, was of the free grace of God. Instead of thinking of the great service he would render to the Lord, David needed to consider the largeness of the Lord's grace to himself, and his entire dependence for all he was or could be upon God. And we have not outgrown the need of this lesson. The more humbly we recognize our utter dependence upon the divine mercy for all our possessions and abilities, the more acceptable and valuable will be the service that we render.

Editorial Notes.

—It is said that when the late Dr. Hovey was a student at Newton, Dr. Barnes Sears wrote to Dr. Park of Andover: "I have a student named Alvah Hovey; he is a lion." Dr. Hovey had indeed a lionine strength and courage, but his gentleness and humility were suggestive of the lamb.

—Much disappointment is felt at the announcement that, because of failure to secure the permission of the Turkish Government, the plan of an American society to carry on a work of excavation at Mugheir (the ancient Ur) has been abandoned. Ur, the birthplace of Abraham, is of great antiquity, and Professor Hilprecht of the University of Pennsylvania has expressed the opinion that its clay tablets date from five to seven thousand years before the Christian era.

—An appeal is being made by the Board of French Evangelization of the Presbyterian church of Canada for the sum of \$60,000 for an extension of the Pointe Aux Trembles schools. These schools are for the education of French-Canadian boys and girls. They are under the management of the Presbyterian denomination and the appeal on their behalf has the approval of the General Assembly. The task of raising the amount required is to be undertaken by Rev. Dr. Amaron of St. John's church Montreal, who for this purpose has obtained release from his pastoral work for six months.

—Commenting on the passage having reference to Uzzah being smitten of the Lord for putting forth his hand to steady the ark, the *Watchman* says: "We observe that most pedobaptist commentators on this passage agree with Professor Blaikie that the lesson of God's judgment upon Uzzah is to beware of following our own devices in the worship of God, when we have clear instructions in His word how we are to worship Him. This is the whole argument of the Baptists for preserving the mode of the ordinance of baptism which Christ enjoined. Respectable scholars do not claim that baptism means anything else than immersion, but they support the practice of sprinkling by arguments based on considerations of convenience or taste. It is not easy to see why a reverent and loyal spirit does not enjoin conformity to the letter of the command."

—The Autumnal Assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland is held the present week at Derby. The attendance at the meetings promises to be large. Prominent on the programme are the "breakfast table meetings" which have been arranged to take place each morn-