

The Church Guardian

— EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR: —

L. H. DAVIDSON, D.C.L., MONTREAL.

— ASSOCIATE EDITOR: —

REV. EDWYN S.W. PENTREATH, B.D., Winnipeg, Man.

Address Correspondence and Communications to the Editor, P.O. Box 504. Exchanges to P.O. Box 1968. For Business announcements See page 14.

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CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY.

FEB. 2.—Purification of St. Mary the Virgin. (otherwise The Presentation of Christ in the Temple).

" 3rd—4th Sunday after Epiphany.

" 10th—5th Sunday after Epiphany.

" 17th—Septuagesima.

" 24th—Sexagesima. St. Matthias, A & M. (Athanasian Creed).

IMMORTALITY.

ARGUMENTS AND PROOFS OF A LIFE IN THE BEYOND.

It may be difficult to understand the conditions of the soul when separated from the body. . . . Difficulty is not disproof, nor is our ignorance ground for doubting. The untutored man feels that man must be more than his material body, and that flesh cannot be identified with spirit. All above us is fleeting and perishable—in place to-day and gone to-morrow. We only see nature in her surface and phenomena; all within is whirl and quiver; a running of sap and a sprouting of foliage; a falling of leaves and a casting off of trunk and branches.

Nothing stands alone, but because of its relations to other things. That quivering pine outside in the Church-yard is only a beautiful, fleeting thing of soil, air and sunshine. That beautiful form, those rounded limbs and glowing cheeks, are only the product of wheat flour and material nourishment. These bodies of ours are only shifting particles, in place to-day but gone to-morrow.

When I meet my friend from whom I had parted some years ago, I do not clasp that same material hand, nor does that look of welcome and kindness beam from those same material eyes that looked me a tender God speed when last we parted. Having survived so many deaths, why should we fear the coming last one? Man dwells in the flesh, but is not flesh. The energetic, unaffected mind will not move the palsied limb, but the limb refuses

action. The trouble is not in the unaffected mind, but in the defected organism.

The soul may expand and grow, but it never changes its substance; it progresses and advances, but it never alters. Man, at the end of three score years and ten, only realizes the powers and possibilities stirring within him, and only realizes that a millennium of Millenium is necessary for their great unfolding. We are not more than what we are by want of time or neglect of opportunity.

The marvelous melody of a Nilsson, or the imagination of a Burns, or the genius of a Shakespeare might have slept unknown during an early life-time, or remained dormant for want of opportunity or development. Genius may only be an advanced stage of every soul's capability. It is the same capability within us that recognises it in others and says to the aspiring soul, what they are I may become also. Oh, if such a wealth of love and depth of sympathy, such powers of thought and strength of feeling are brought to life during these few short years of earthly existence, what will be the result of that eternity which stretches out before us with no limit as to time or possibility? The brutes may have instinct and memory, but they have no aspirations beyond their little peck of oats or the narrow limits of a meadow pasture, no unfulfilled destiny which calls for time and opportunity of its complete fulfilment. They attain their highest development now, and fulfil the end for which God created them. Man alone foreknows his own death and looks toward a coming existence, and that knowledge and foresight was given to instruct and prepare him for it. The conviction of immortality stirs within us. Thought cannot think itself dead nor be a mourner at his own funeral. Nor can the soul of man be imprisoned within the narrow limits of a skull any more than "Paradise Lost" or the creations of Shakespeare could only be the result of cellular tissue, or assimilated wheat flour and incorporated beefsteak. Could it be that the mighty intellect of La Placé, the love of a St. John, with its marvelous tenderness, the soul of a Whitfield with its energy and eloquence, or the genius of a Milton with its mighty powers of creation and construction were nothing more than the product of a pound or more of inanimate material? Separate and apart in its essential existence is the soul of man incarnate within his changing perishing body, and its independent being is shown in a thousand manifestations of self life and self-conscious existence!

The whole history of heroes and martyrs shows that when the outer man has fallen shattered and dying on the field of battle or perished at the stake, the inner man has triumphed in victory and smiled amid its agonies!

The fact of death itself suggests the quality of existence. It is the flight of the glorious energizing soul that leaves the frame so empty and meaningless. A moment ago that hand was uplifted to clasp your own; a moment ago those eyes beamed out in love and intelligence—only a shudder and a gasp, and how cold and vacant lies that mass of clay! The spirit has gone, hence that awful change! Does not that mighty force and energy still exist? Does its vanishing from our sight give any proof of its destruction? Has a particle of genuine evidence ever been produced that the real life powers of any soul were ever destroyed or obliterated? Who asks for proof when it is speaking within him? Oh, you who believe in the goodness of God and His divine benevolence! you who believe in His love and the fidelity and truthfulness of your own nature! you who caught those mysterious rays of light which were from a realm beyond this, or those thoughts which were divine intuitions—were they but phantoms of the soul—mysterious shadows cast by no substance, snares and de-

lusions intended by God to mock and deceive you!

But we are not left to the analogies of nature, and the convictions within us, though they are strong and irresistible. There were reports of a western continent lying beyond that stretch of waters—there were visions of the golden gardens of Hesperides and fables of a lost Atlantis beyond those rolling billows—there were evidences borne upon the waves and cast up by the waters, but the full confirmation of its existence came from the lips of Columbus, when he proclaimed to the nations of Europe, "I have seen this great land and have stood on its borders! I have crossed this wide ocean and bring you full tidings of its reality and existence."

He from whose finger-tips flowed light and the divine power of healing—at whose voice the dead arose and "the blind came seeing"—declares to us the stupendous revelation that "death is swallowed up in victory," and that they who are lowered into the grave are lifted up into a higher existence! From Jesus on the cross commending his soul to the care of His Father, down through a vast host of apostles and martyrs, heroes and statesmen, sages and warriors, "a multitude whom no man can number," the noblest of earth and the grandest of humanity have lived and died in the hope of a blessed immortality. Can you believe that the vast array of the great and gifted were only the victims of empty abstractions, while the unspiritual few among the doubters and godless are the most worthy of belief and acceptance?

Immortality is the only adequate sequel and solution of our present existence. Without a life beyond, the inspiring motive of all unselfish action is weakened and almost obliterated, while pleasure and enjoyment become the highest good, and suffering and death the greatest evils.

Immortality, as a belief, is necessary to the proper ordering of this present life; necessary as a hope and comfort; necessary that the world should be governable, happy in all our ideas of order and justice, goodness and God! The grand conviction that there is retribution and compensation hereafter is the moral cement that holds this lower social fabric together! The conviction that the darkness will be made light, and the crooked places straight, is the hope and encouragement of every weary burdened mortal.

Faith and hope are the beacon-lights that flash above life's clouded night and do not leave us to grope our way through gloom and darkness, without inspiration, comfort, hope or God. Immortality is the cap-stone of that mental, moral and spiritual fabric which we realize has only begun in life. It makes man more than the rotting corn-husks of a last year's growth. It makes him great and noble, a child of eternity and of God. Yes, when that faith and hope, that tenderness and love, which God has planted in the human breast, spread sail to coast the dim and shadowy shores of that other life beyond, and those mysterious powers and influences prompt and lead us on, when as we journey, low and pleading voices fall upon our inner ears, and lights and shadows flit before our inner spiritual eyes, we will trust in them, for, like the stars in the heaven above, to which the sea-tossed mariner looks and by which he determines his course, so, too, they are the stars set in the soul's horizon by a loving God, not to deceive, but to shine down upon this lower life, to lead and guide us to our eternal and celestial port.—Rev. John F. Von Herrlich in *Pacific Churchman*.

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