Signs of the Christ

The following is a report of a sermon, "The Signs of the Christ," recently delivered by Rev. Dr. Jordan, of Strathroy, the professor-elect of Old Testament exegesis in Queen's University, We give it by request:

[John vi., 29, 30.]

This chapter records a great con-flict between faith and unbelief; be-tween the noble ministry which appeals to the spirit and the shallow sensationalism which demands signs for the senses. According to his own claims, according to the testimony of his disciples, according to the witness of eighteen centuries, Jesus Christ was an extraordinary person. His life was a strange blending of grandeur and love-Ainess, of divine power and human simpolicy, of majestic wrath against hypocrisy, and tender pity for penitence. Such a person could not come into this common life without creating a sensa-tion. He was himself a sign—a sign to be spoken against, or a sign to guide men to God. We are told, moreover, that he did many "migety works," works which revealed the strange power that was in him, works which ministered to the suffering men and women who gathered round him. Men have been debating for centuries concerning the precise meaning of the word miracle, and it is probable that the discussion will last for some time yet. We would not speak contemptuously of such discussions. We do not wish to insinuate that they have been profitless, or that no progress has been made. But we are glad that there is no need for us to be now drawn into subtle speculations. The subthat our Lord brings be-us is the need of faith himself. This is sometimes met by the worldly craving for signs, and hence we are led to speak of the real signs of the Christ. We have no difficulty in believing that our Lord did many mighty works. Being such an one as we find him, he must do strange works with perfect naturalness and ease. Perhaps these miracles do not influence our faith very much now, and to some people they are a great perplexity, but as a rule thoughtful Christians find them very helpful in illustrating the person, life and min-istry of the Redeemer. Let us take note of this, then, that our Lord never wrought these great deeds for the pur-pose of displaying himself, or in re-sponse to a vulgar demand for sensa-Startling, dramatic, were his deeds, at times, but they were never done to order. They came in response to some pressing need, or sprung spontaneously from his own rich life. In this very chapter, in which our Lord rebukes the sign-seeking spirit, we cead of two wonderful works. When the crowds had followed him into a lesert place, many of them sincerely Resirous of hearing and understanding ais teaching, they were weary and lungry, and his compassion was drawn put towards them; then he blessed the canty store, and as that which men place in his hands ever grows, it multiplied so as to meet the need of a famishing people. The miracle thus rightly used had its effect, and many felt that they stood in the presence of a great prophet. Then to escape the clamor of the crowd, he flees to the lonely mountain, and when he would join his disciples, he comes calmly to full of meaning, even the dark shad-them across the restless sea and speaks ows have their purpose. God is over the word of comfort, "It is I; be not all. Though we cannot completely un-Next day when the people sought him he was grieved that so many came not because of hunger for truth, or even desire for miracles, but to get bread for their bodies, in an easy, novel fashion. The words of one who never uttered an unjust reproach are, "Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting hie." Then the Jews ask him a great question in a shallow carping spirit, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" They are very accommodating, they are often doing what are called religious works, but if he can put his finger upon any particular thing that is important as a work of God they feel able and willing to do it. We all have so nething of this shallow self-sufficiency. When we stand in the presence of some great teacher who makes us feel God's lofty soul-reaching demand the sense of our littleness may annoy us, and in our irritable mood we cry what is the use of all this visionary, unpractical talk? Come down to de-If there is any great thing God would have us do point it out distinct-

shall we do that we might work the works of God?" This is surely a great question if asked in the right spirit. I. The Christ's demand for faith in

himself. The Great Preacher does not shrink and say that life is full of op-portunities and there are many works of God. He does not explain and expose in sarcastic words their wrong attitude of spirit. No, he meets their question in a perfectly straight fashion. He demands not one work, how-ever difficult, not a single deed, how-ever glorious, but a state of soul, a habit of mind. With what seems to them presumptuous daring he thrusts himself forward as the object of men's living faith. "This is the word of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." He asks not for external actions, but for an inner life; not for one act of the mind, one flash of belief in a moment of excitement, but for a continuous state of trust and hope in the God-sent Saviour. This claim is bold, but it is deep, as well as his daring is not rashness; every word he utters he will make good with his life-blood.

Will make good with his life-blood.

He puts faith before works, being before doing. They say, "What shall we do?" He replies, "Be believers, be men of faith." The difficulty was that there was so few believers. There were many sealous strong that the same was so few believers. zealous ritualists, many religious bigots, many political partisans, but few men of broad, enlightened, loving faith. The Jews believed in themselves and their nation; they clung to a post which they only half-understood, but they were not really believing in God, or they could not have crucified the Son of Man. They counted themselves favorites of heaven, they lived by rule, and they were willing to add another item to their programme if they could thus lay God under obligation. Jesus sweeps aside all their paltry penances and self-made crosses. He does not despise good works, acts of worship, endeavors after usefulness when they spring from a healthful soul. A gardener does not despise grapes when he cuts off leaves, trims the branches, and even transplants the root into better soil. He knows that the great thing is the hidden life. We forget this in the spiritual sphere, and we need to be reminded that the supreme thing is right relationship to God. What he asks, then, is a condition of

mind and heart, a living power, a constant process, influencing thought, controlling life, building character. We do not undervalue special hours of enthusiasm and excitement when the spirit is called to conscious, consecutive and definite resolves, but we maintain that faith is the daily habit and temper of the Christian soul. This is the work of God, the soul responding to God's influence, the heart vibrating in accord with divine love, a God-inspired movement of the human spirit, and so in the deepest sense a work of God. It issues in deeds which God can accept and approve. Out of this comes trustfulness and hope, spontaneous generosity and unselfish work. The deepest divisions of men is into believers and unbelievers, men of quickening faith and men of cramping unbelief. All the believers are not in the church, and all the unbelievers are not out of it. Life is a mingling of diverse forces; the time for drawing the line is not yet, and we are not competent to draw it, but we can examine ourselves. To the man of faith this life is derstand him, "his mercy endureth for ever." There is a remedy for sindeath is vanquished, hell is conquered, heaven is opened. This faith casts out cynicism and leaves no room for despair. To the believer there is no intelligible purpose behind this world's mighty forces. Life is a riddle which cannot be solved. Sometimes it is a roaring farce, sometimes a terrible tragedy. There is no relief for our heaviest burden, no balm for our bitterest woe. The future is all dark, and no one knows whether there is anything beyond the darkness. Surely, then, the first need of the soul is an

intelligent living faith. This faith is to be centered in the One of our Lord's last words to his disciples was: "Believe in God; believe also in me." We do not make ourselves Christian believers by an act of our own will; we are drawn by his personal attraction. The revelation of God, which has assumed so many forms, reaches its highest manifestation in the face of Jesus Christ. To the Christ God draws us in many ways. The wonders of nature, the drama of history, the stirring of conscience may all prepare us to see the meaning of life, and to seek the virtue of the Great Sacrifice. Faith in someone we must have, or we do not live the the divine requirements. "What true human life at all; the soul starves

minister to this need, and we may minister to them, but our life is not complete until it attains to faith in him who unites the human and divine, who came down that he might lift us up. Jesus Christ calls men to himself with calm dignity, because he knows that when they yield themselves to him they are following God-given impulses and fulfilling their highest destiny. Hence the deep meaning of the words

II. The demand of unbelieving men. How is the Christ met when he thus reveals himself boldly? They complained of his parables and riddles, but when he spoke plainly, when he flashed the whole truth upon them, they treated him with scorn. "Ah, this is the great work of God to believe in thee! What sign showest thou? What thee! What sign showest thou? What dost thou work?" They had heard of signs, and perhaps seen some, but they crave and cry for more. They will have him put himself on exhibition. He must prove himself to be God's Christ by becoming a religious quack, playing tricks with the sun and stars to meet their vulgar fancy? Absurb! How could the real God-sent messenger reveal himself in ways that would degrade both himself and them? What is their good opinion? What is a little temporal popularity compared with the true revelation of God and the real good of seeking souls? If we would bring everything to the test of the senses or measure the whole measure of truth by the rule of one little science we display the same shallow, sign-seeking spirit. We are in a more re-sponsible position than the caviling Jews, because the Christ has in the course of ages created new signs. which have great weight in the court of the highest reason. If we wish to "see and believe," to have the things of the soul brought down to the sphere of sense, if we want the great facts of God's love translated into startling. sensational signs, then we are offering a kind of faith that Jesus does not desire and will not have. Suppose a father said to his son: "My boy, you must trust me in this matter. I can see clearly the reason of it, but cannot fully explain it now," and the child was to say "Yes, I will believe you when I see it; I will trust you only so far as I can understand." You know that such childish skepticism would wound the father's heart, and what is called believing in such a case is not faith at all. The true child-like trust Christ asks from us, and he will train us into sympathy with himself, so that we shall prove that "the secret of the Lord" is with those that fear him. Not by startling the crowd, but by stealing gently into the depth of our being does the Christ accredit himself.

III. The signs of the Christ-There is one visible sign connected with our religion, it may be seen on many churches, and in some cases the church itself is built in its form. Some people decorate their sanctuaries with it, and others, with or without thought use it as an ornament. Some bow before it that it may stimulate their devotions, while others ignorantly adore it. While we may think that these uses of a visible thing are full of danger, we must not lose sight of the reality represented. What is this sign? It is the sign of the cross! The cross was once as repulsive as the gallows, as the skull and cross-bones. What wealth of life, what power, what sympathy, enthusiasm and heroism it must have taken to transfer this symbol of shame into a sign of truest glory, so that it now speaks to the devout, in-telligent man of the self-sacrifice of God. Apart from the Christ the cross is a mere symbol. It is only as we find the cross in him that it becomes a saving power. As you read this chapter you are made to feel that in the spiritual sense the sign of the Christ is the cross. He is his own sign, bethe incarnation sacrifice. We do not need any sign of the sun except itself, its beautiful light and cheering warmth; so Jesus Christ is his own sign. The men who received him fairly and trusted him fully were changed and uplifted by the influence of his companionship. are impressed by his character. He is God revealed in the form of human goodness. We feel that there would be something irreverent in speaking about his eleverness or ability, as all other qualities are thrown into the shade by the beauty and perfection of his moral life, the symmetry of his

spiritual nature. The world is a nobler, more hopeful place because he has been in it. He has kindled purer feeling, loftier aspirations and greater thoughts in many souls, who have been as salt in so-ciety. His perfect life, like nothing but itself, is a constant sign standing in the face of Christian society. Men may shrink from him, or try to put him off with empty compliments, but there he is for evermore speaking of God and salvation. The bare thought of losing him makes us tremble-

O, Jesus, ever with us stay,
Make all our moments calm and
bright, Chase the dark night of sin away Shed o'er the world Thy holy light.

The sign of the Christ is his power to deal with the burdened soul, the guilty conscience. Skepticism laughs at our fears, superstition torments us, Jesus deepens our sense of sin that we may learn the meaning of his cru-cifixion. His is no superficial work, no smart jugglery. He wrestled with sin all through his life, in Gethsemane he bore the mysterious burden, on Calvary he poured out his soul, and made intercession for the transgressors. In him mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

"There was no other good enough To pay the price of sin; He only could unlock the gate Of heaven, and let us in."

There are many philosophers and teachers, but only one Saviour. When in the hour of spiritual distress we have found forgiveness and peace, we have proved in our own experience the

sign of the cross. The sign of the Christ is his power to

sustain the men whom he has re-deemed and forgiven. This promise that men should live by his flesh and blood has been abundantly justified. This is a hard saying that was at first scoffed at, and is still a stumblingblock to unbelief. Even this gives us strength in the hour of temptation and courage in the face of death. The fact hat Jesus infuses his life into men in proportion to their faith, this is a sign nat cannot be explained away. There are many types of theology, many forms of church order, many styles of preaching, but through all the personal power of the Christ acts upon men as the motive of service and the secret of spiritual success. This great truth is brought before us in the solemn, symbolic service, in which we call to remembrance his cross and passion. If we are half-dead, cold in worship and feeble in work, it is because we do not get near enough to him; our faith does not sufficiently drink in the lifeblood and feed upon the living bread The cry of Charles Kingsley, "I cannot, cannot live without the man Christ Jesus," is the confession of every faithful soul. We may exist in some fashion without him, and unconsciously

be indebted to him for much that is

purest and sweetest in our life, but we

for lack of sympathy. The hell of distrust and jealousy has the keenest torment. Friends, wife and children may all minister to this need, and we may cherish hopes of the true eternal life; in a word, we cannot in the deepest sense commune with God except through the Son of Man. Where are we, then? Are we still asking for signs and wonders, or are we seeking to trust ourselves in his hands, seeking to lay the present with all its cares, and future with all its uncertainty, at his fee? If this is our spirit, then, we may know what it is to eat his flesh and drink his blood, and we may have the sign of his cross on our hearts, and in our lives. Amen.

THIS CARGO OF SNAKES

Through the Efforts of the Big Boa Fifty More Serpents Have To Be Considered.

The tribulations which arose upon the arrivol at this port on the bark Atlantico with 426 snakes from Para, Brazil, and which had already driven nearly every custom official in the department to the verge of distraction, were multiplied yesterday afternoon by an astonishing occurrence. Briefly told the big boa constrictor had fifty young boa constrictors. When the news reached the custom house consternation stalked through the marble corridors.

"I think it was very inconsiderate of the boa constrictor," Mr. Howell is reported to have exclaimed petulant-"Here I have gone to the trouble of preparing all the documents in the case, including tabulated statements, inventories, manifests and itemized accounts, and just as the report reaches Washington, and before, mind you, I can get any instructions from the president, this boa constrictor goes and upsets the whole business by springing a young orphan asylum on

"Couldn't you tabulate the young boa constrictors as supplementary exhibits—exhibit A. B., and so on?" suggested one of the clerks.

"How am I to tabulate them as exhibits," retorted Mr. Howell, fiercely, "when there are only 26 letters in the alphabet and 50 boa constrictors?" This silenced the officious minion. Meanwhile Immigration Inspector Montgomery was in a state of painful agitation. The main question that has arisen in connection with the cargo of serpents was whether they should be classified as "tools of trade or "immigrants in transit." Mr. Montgomery has insisted all along that snakes were not immigrants, and that he could not under the law be com-pelled to inspect them. On the other hand, many of the deputies in the collector's office have held just as stubbornly that it was preposterous classify living creatures as tools of trade.

It was this deputy who received the whole matter to the authorities at Washington. In the interim Senor Runhi, the snake charmer, was permitted to land his cargo under bond, and a special officer was stationed at the door of his place on Canal street to see that none of the serpents got away.

It was this deputyw ho received the

first news of yesterday's remarkable event. He was seated on a barrel a the extreme edge of the curb, faithfully guarding the entrance, and all ready to scoot in case he should see a snake, when Senor Runhi came out and whispered in his ear. The deputy nearly fell off the barrel.
"What!" he gasped. "You con't

mean it?" "Yes," said Senor Runhi, smilingly, "fifty."

Suffering grasshoppers! velled the officer, instinctively drawing up his He has worn bicycle guards legs. around his ankles ever since he has been on duty, but in imagination he could feel a regiment of small serpents wriggling up his trousers. whillikins!" he added, when he be-came somewhat calmer. "Is that came somewhat calmer. straight stuff?"

It was certainly as straight as fifty new-born boa constrictors could be expected to be. They were about the size of wienerwursts, and formed a dark-brown, vermicolor heap in one corner of the den. The mother boa reclined in graceful festoons at the opposite side. She looked like a dropsical ship's cable, and kept one on her family and the other eye roving for intruders. Mother serpents are not noted for their affability, and on such occasions charmers lose their power to charm, like witches on Hallowe'en night. Senor Runhi kept a discreet distance.

The outcome of the affair is impossible to predict, as they say in reports of political deals. Certain it is that the situation is materially altered. Instead of 426 snakes, the cargo of the Atlantico must now be de-The boa constrictor is doing as well

scribed as consisting of 476. as could be expected.—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

In the mythology of Ancient Greece Hymen, the god of marriage, was the half brother of Esculapius, the god of medicine. The ancients believed that marriage and health should go together, and as a result the

Greeks of that time have ever since been looked upon as types of physical perfection.

Sickly mothers cannot bear healthy children. The prospective mother should use every precaution to preserve and foster her health. Not alone for the sake of the little one to come but for her own sake. A perfectly healthy woman is in no danger and in very little pain at her time of trial.

There must be due preparation for this time. Nature makes the prepara-tory period three-fourths of a year and women who take the hint from nature and use the time properly need have no fears of the outcome. Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription is a medicine designed to cure all distinctly feminine ailments and taken during the period of gestation it renders childbirth easy, safe and comparatively painless.

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letter free of charge. Every letter is held strictly private and sacredly confidential. Designing men work on women's feelings, by advising women to "write to a woman who understands woman's needs." It is useless to seek advice about disease of any woman who is not a physician. So far as known no qualified woman physician is connected with any proprietary medicine establishment.

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COERCING A HEN

R. R. R.

At First She Was Averse to Raising a Brood, but Now She's "Setting" All Right.

Down in Missouri lives a boy who likes pets. He began with a pair of dog that he had traded a knife for. His parents allowed nim to keep the pigeons till they multiplied so that there were pigeons all over the place. Then he sold the pigeons and bought a goat that ate the clothes off the line every Monday. He was compelled to dispose of it, and traded it for a pair of game chickens. In a week there wasn't a rooster left in the neighborhood: the game rooster had killed them all. His father took the game chickens for a ride one night and lost them three miles out in the country. Three days afterwards the boy brought them home, but he never told anyone how he got them. And so he fought for his pets one by one. His dog was lost, his lamb stolen, his rabbits ran away. He had come down to one old

hen.
Recently he bought a "settin" of eggs. A "settin" of eggs is as many as a mother hen can hatch into chicks He had made up his mind that his hen was lonely and needed company, and what so companionable as a batch of little chicks to scratch for? The hen, however, had different views, and didn't want to sit on the eggs. he was not a boy to be stumped by a hen-he had borne too many losses

He put the eggs in a box, in which he had made a nest of hay. Then he planted the indignant hen on them. Put a board in which he had bored a lot of air-holes over her, and left her to come to terms. That night his big brother kicked off the box and set the hen free. The next morning the boy put her back, and put some bricks on the board, for he thought she had raised the board and released herself. The brother kicked both bricks and board off that night. The boy replaced hen and board again and again they were kicked off. Then he got a board and made a hole in it for the hen to poke her head through, and nailed the board to the box. Once a day he takes the board off and chases the hen around the yard for exercise, and twice a day he carries food and

water to her.
What's the use of trying to discourage a boy like that?

TRAMPS AND RAILROADS

An Attempt to Keep Hobces Off the Cars-Railroads Should Combine.

At the request of the general manager of a large railroad company, Mr. Josiah Flynt, the tramp expert, spent two months recently in investigating the company's efforts to put a stop to the stealing of rides. He found that of all the roads in America this one had the worst reputation among the "ho-boes." The "railroad fever" is hard to cure, but it is one that it behooves the companies to treat heroically. Writing in the June Century, Mr. Flynt says: "Can the tramps be driven off the railroads? It was to satisfy my own curiosity in regard to this question, and to find out how successful my employer, the general manager, had been in his attempt to answer it in the affirmative, that I undertook the investigation which I have described. Previous to his efforts to keep tramps off railroads, it had been thought, as he has stated, that it was cheaper to put up with them, nuisance though they were, than to pay the bills which a crusade against them would occa-sion. It has at last been demonstrat-ed, however, that tramps can be refused free transportation by one of our greatest railroads, with a saving of expense to the company and with great benefit to the community, and the time has come when the public is justified in demanding that all railroads take a similar stand in regard to this evil.
"If all railroad companies wou

traction of the life; third, a few would try to become professional criminals again, partly out of revenge and partly because tramping on the turnpikes would be too disagreeable; and, fourth, a large number would take to the highways, where some might be made to do farm-work, and where all would, at least, be in touch with farm life. The reader may take exception to the third possibility, and think that great harm would come of an increase in the professional criminal class; but as I have said, tramps are really discouraged criminals, and a return to the old life, of which they made a failure, would only land them in the penitentiary.

"It is probably impossible ever entirely to eliminate the vagrant element of a nation's life, and no such hope is held out in connection with the reform advocated in this article; but this much is certain: had all the railroads been as close to tramps, during my first excursions into Hoboland, as one them has recently become, one man at least, would not have attempted any free riding, and would not have found so many tramps to study."

BOOKKEEPING IN BABYLONIA.

Paper and ink are perishable things, like certain other "modern improve-ments," but some of the clay tablets used by earlier civilizations still survive. In the buried city of Nippur American explorers have recently found in one room more than 700 of them, the business records of a rich firm of merchants, Ulurashu Sons.

These documents are dated in the reign of Artaxerxes I. (465-425 B.C.) and Darius II. (423-405 B.C.). The tables are of various sizes, some resembling the ordinary cake of soap of commerce. They are covered with cuneiform characters, clear and distinct as when the bookkeeper of Ulurashu inscribed them, twenty-five hundred years ago. Among them is this guaranty for

twenty years that an emerald is so well set that it will not fall out: "Bel-ahiddina and Bel-shumu, sons of Bel, and Hatin, son of Bazuza, spoke unto Bel-nadishumu, son of Morashu, as follows: 'As concerns the gold ring set with an emerald, we guarantee that for twenty years the emerald will not fall out of ring. If it should fall out before the expiration of twenty years, Bel-ahiddina (and the two others) shall pay to Bel-nadinshumu an indemnity of ten mana of silver."

Then follow the names of seven wit-

nesses and of an official who is described as "the scribe of the Concord-ance of Proper Names." The document concludes with the thumb-nail marks of the contracting parties.

There are also leases of various kinds and contracts for the sale of sun-dried bricks and other merchan-

dise, and for the loan of seed corn and oxen for plowing.

COSTLY HATS FOR MEN.

The most expensive hat on record cost \$1,500 in gold, and was presented to Gen. Grant while in Mexico in 1882. It is now on exhibition in the National Museum at Washington-perhaps the finest Mexican sombrero that was ever

While Wm. H. Seward was secretary of State in Lincoln's cabinet, some of his admirers in South America sent him a Panama hat which cost \$1,000. It was on exhibition in a show window in New York for a year or more. Panama hats used to be frequently sold as high as \$500 each. A New York hatter says that in 1867 he sold three hats at that price in a single day, but they are no longer in the market. The most expensive hat he market. The most expensive hat he has sold for several years was bought by a New York banker last summer for \$110. It was the last fine Panama hat in stock. Such hats are still worn by the hidalgos in South America. They are not made in Panama, but got the name because that city was formerly the greatest market for them. The finest hats come from Guayaquil and Payta, Peru. They are made of the fibre of the pita, or pineapple plant, which is as soft and pliable as silk, and some of them are so fine that they can be folded up and carried in the vest pocket.—Chicago Record.

The Appetite of a Goat

agree upon concerted action against tramps, in a few years the following Stomach and Liver are out of order. Very satisfactory results would be All such should know that Dr. King's tramps, in a few years the following very satisfactory results would be achieved: First, very few tramps, if any, would try to beat their way on trains; second, an appreciable number of them would give up tramping entirely, because their present railroad privileges are ato many the main at-

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