

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

THE GOOD WORK WROUGHT ON JESUS.

In Matthew xxvi. 6, and in Mark xiv. 3, we have the story of the woman who poured the precious ointment on the Saviour and of the angry protest of the disciples at this alleged waste of money. John tells us (Chapter 12) that the woman was Mary, sister of Lazarus, and that it was Judas who upbraided her and also what were his motives and wishes.

Has the reader sometimes wondered why it was that the Lord singled out this act of Mary's from all the noble deeds of self-denial and love on record so as to ordain that wherever the gospel would be preached in all the world this which the woman had done should also be told for a memorial of her? The gospel tells us all what Jesus felt and did for us, and this story tells us all what this woman felt and did for Jesus. Whether or not we can fully understand why the two are to go together, the first justifies an examination of the case. This is a beautiful picture of what was done by one whose heart was moved by the love of Jesus and surrendered with circumstances so dark as to form an appropriate background. We will look first at the background, then at the picture. Matthew says that the disciples were filled with indignation and upbraided the woman for that waste. John says it was Judas. So Judas started the indignation and made the others believe he was right and the woman wrong. The other disciples loved the Master; Judas did not. They cared for the poor, he did not; but wanted to steal part of the money which from so large a sum he hoped to do unsuspected. It is remarkable how selfish, designing men can influence the honest and unsuspecting. Their words will eat as doth a canker, and whether like Hymeneus and Philetus, they err respecting the truth, teaching false doctrine, or, like arch traitors, they aim their poisonous arrows at the righteous; they can so far influence the unsuspecting as to make reasoning with them unavailing; the canker remains. How well it was for these disciples that Judas revealed his true character before his deadly virus mingled with their vitality.

Judas' plea was plausible enough. "Here," he says, "is ointment that might have been sold for 300 pence and given to the poor. They are dying around us from want. How many precious lives might be saved by that money (about fifty dollars)? And now it is not so much as used to clothe the Master or purchase food for Him or His disciples, but poured out on His body, doing no good to Him or any one else. What can it be but pride and extravagance? How much does he or the woman care for the poor?"

Judas' policy is to put Christ and the poor in antagonism. To consider whatever is given to Christ is so much taken from the poor. It is honorable and just to give to the poor; while to give to Christ is extravagance and waste. It shows us what a disciple of Christ can do when Satan enters into him.

Jesus defends the woman from these unjust reproaches and of her action makes this record: "She hath wrought a good work on Me. She hath done what she could. She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily, I say unto you, whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of as a memorial of her."

Jesus loved this little family, Martha, Mary and Lazarus, and while in Bethany made His home with them. Martha expressed her love for Him in

active preparations for His comfort. Mary was so absorbed with His teaching that she could scarcely be induced to leave His feet. But Lazarus died and the sisters were left alone. Jesus came to comfort them. He wept with them. He groaned in His spirit and was troubled. He raised Lazarus and the happy family were again united. All this increased Mary's affection for her Lord and Master, and she has now come to the house of Simon, the leper, with her costly spikenard to anoint His body. She had not bought this ointment, but had kept it for this purpose. Judas did not murmur at the money she had paid for it, but for not selling it. Wealthy families often kept this ointment to perfume their houses and anoint the bodies of their dead friends for burial, and Mary had likely bought it in early life as a costly luxury, and was now glad that she could use it to express her love for Jesus. Nothing was too costly to do for Him who first loved us so much, and when she could not by volition increase her emotions, she by this noble act did what she could. Many when they think of Jesus' unspeakable love to them try to increase their emotions of grateful love to Him and are grieved when these feelings will not come. Let them cease from such vain endeavors and ask: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? and do it with all the heart. Jesus did not say that Mary felt thus and so, but she has done what she could. Let us attend to doing the will of God and He will look after our feelings.

This act was to Mary a test of her love to Christ as well as an expression of it to others. If she had entertained the Lord and fed and clothed Him, this would be right; but it would be only what she would do for others. She would do the same to friends and neighbors, and even to the unthankful, and her doing it to Jesus would be no proof that she loved Him more than she did others. But in this case she did to Him what she would not do to others, and what He had no need of, and what in itself had no real value, but what was an expression of her ardent affection for her Lord. In this act both giver and receiver were particularly blessed. It was a cheerful giver, being loved and owned of the Lord.

When Isaiah, in Chapter 53, foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, at the 9th and 10th verses, he reached the point which divides these sufferings from the glory. He says: "They made His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death, though He had done no violence, neither was deceit in His mouth," R. V. Jesus died as a criminal, and it was the intention of his enemies that He should fill a criminal's grave. But in this they were disappointed. They could no longer insult or vilify Him. When Jesus cried, "It is finished," He was completing the atonement, drawing the sting out of death and passing through the dark cloud into the dawn of His glory. The God who had just forsaken Him is now drawing near to meet His beloved, and as Jesus bows His head to die His spirit passes into the hands of a loving Father. Bodily indignities as well as sufferings ended at his death. At the request of Joseph, Pilate gives him the body that he knew had done no violence. Nicodemus bought a large mixture of myrrh and aloes in which to wrap it with Joseph's fine linen. Instead of Jesus' body being put into the grave of the wicked, as His foes intended, He was with these two rich men in His death who buried Him in a most affectionate and honorable manner. Nicodemus wrought a good work on the body of Jesus. The two Marias intended to do the same with their sweet spices, but Mary, sister of Lazarus, was before them all. She came beforehand to anoint His body to the burying. She wrought that good work on Him before His body was scourged or His face marred or smitten by cruel hands. Before His temples were pierced with the crown of thorns, or His hands and his feet were nailed to the tree, she did that

good work unsolicited, expressing a love to Jesus so much like His love to a lost world, that whosoever His love and work will be told, her's will not pass unnoticed. He will be remembered as a conqueror and she as a trophy.

How blessed it is to be active and liberal for Christ, to be anxious to devote time and money to advance His cause, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS. Such He owes here, such will come forth to the first resurrection, and such will stand on the King's right hand in the judgment day. Calls come to assist the work of Christ all around us. Shall we heed these calls? Will we be ZEALOUS FOR GOOD WORKS?

Original Contributions.

THE WAY OF THE SPIRIT.

There is a class of theologians arising in our midst who are seeking to do away with all authority in religion. To the lover of truth their teaching has relatively a pleasant aspect. Looking at this advance movement from the angle of vision of a Disciple of Christ, it presents a scene in the present state of the religious world truly gratifying. Under the Titian-like blows of these giant truth-seekers the whole fabric of human tradition and human authority in religion is falling to the ground. Creeds and confessions of faith, the pride of our ancestors, are found too narrow for the ever-expanding mind of the spiritual man. It is now beginning to dawn upon the human mind that no uninspired man, or council of uninspired men, can formulate a code of religious laws that will command the consciences of men throughout all ages. It is clearly understood by advanced thinkers of the present day that theology is changing, that the reformed doctrines of Luther and of Calvin were forced to yield to the enlightenment of the eighteenth century, and that the eighteenth century theology of Wesley and other reformers is not final in the light of nineteenth century theology. That this has been understood, by however few, must gladden the heart of every Christian, notwithstanding what discomfort it may cause the different religious bodies. It must shock every true Presbyterian to learn that those truths upon which his faith is founded, and for which his ancestors shed their life's blood, are now undergoing revision, that they may suit the enlightenment of the present age. The very foundations of all sectdom have been undermined during the last century, and it awaits but the dawning of the twentieth to see the whole fabric fall to the earth to arise no more. True Christianity is already coming forth Phoenix-like from the ruins. May God hasten the day when it shall stand erect in all its Christ-given majesty and heaven-donated power upon the ruins of crumbling factions and human tradition.

While there is much to commend, yet there is somewhat to fear in this new theology. When a re-action takes place it generally goes from one extreme to the other. The tyranny of Louis XVI was more than equalled in the reign of terror. The austere morality of Cromwell's regimen gave place to the extreme licentiousness and vice of Charles' reign. Such is the case with the new teaching. The human mind has been bound so long by the cast-iron creeds of centuries that when it begins to throw off its bondage it seeks to rid itself of all authority entirely. Not only must the creeds and confessions of faith be cast aside, the decrees of synods and presbyters, but it seeks also to discard the word of God as an absolute authority. In the words of one of its advocates it says, "Autonomy, not heteronomy, is the way of the spirit." It will