

## The Christian.

ST. JOHN, N. B., DECEMBER, 1898

## EDITORIAL.

## OPENING THE HEART.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me.—Rev. iii, 20.

Jesus spoke these words thirty years after he had ascended to heaven. The Author of the faith, who had once delivered it to his apostles, had now descended to finish it in this wonderful Book of Revelation. Besides the many things herein revealed, Jesus shows throughout the book an anxiety to save the lost, not exceeded by his weeping over Jerusalem, nor His prayers on the cross for the pardon of his murderers.

The book begins with an account of Jesus' ardent desire to enter human hearts, and closes with his declamation, good for all time and in all places, "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Where in all the literature of earth can be found a farewell address fit to be compared to this of the Son of Man to all his lost brethren? His own dear words, "ANY MAN," and "WHOSOEVER WILL," cut off all distinction of race, rank and condition, and leave without a ripple the deep currents of that love which flows "into all the world," and "to every creature." While we behold a sight so wonderful as the Creator knocking for admission at the door of man's heart, we notice how clearly he recognizes the dignity of man. Though He claims that heart as his palace, He allows man to hold the key, and enters only on condition that "man hears his voice and opens the door." He will not force an entrance. These facts, so just, so plain and reasonable, and in such perfect accord with the mission of Christ and with all his teaching, should be understood by all men. The sinner can do nothing to merit salvation or to procure salvation; but he can accept of salvation as a free gift from Him who has done both, and his acceptance of the great salvation is the same as opening the door for Christ to enter.

But we are apt to reverse the order of Christ and to teach the anxious enquirer that it is he who is to stand and knock at the door of Christ to be let in, and that he is to continue to knock and pray more earnestly and seek the prayers of the church to induce Christ to open the separating door.

Now, as it is as natural for the convinced sinner to pray to God for mercy, as it is for the troubled infant to cry to its mother, we would utter no word against the sinner pleading for pardon through the blood of the cross. Everything in the gospel encourages a prayer so very proper. But we wish no one to think that the blessed Saviour is keeping back salvation, as under lock and key,

from any anxious sinner, but is earnestly seeking to save him, and that the change and submission must be with the sinner and not with the Saviour.

Let any careful reader of the New Testament say whether Jesus says more about the sinner seeking the Saviour, or the Saviour seeking the sinner. Was he not constantly dwelling on the latter and always knocking at the door for admission? When did he ever turn away a humble penitent or keep him in suspense? He is the same to-day: knocks at the door, but men must open it or be lost. "But," says the objector, "the Lord opened Lydia's heart, and Lydia did not open her own heart." The Lord opened Lydia's heart just as he does the heart of others, by knocking at the door and pleading with her till she was induced to open it. Had he not knocked the door would never be opened. The Lord sent his ambassador to Lydia, who told her of his dying love to her, and besought her in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. She believed the story with all her heart, Christ entered in and they supped together.

Some imagine that the Lord opened Lydia's heart in some mysterious way before she heard the gospel, and that she was thus qualified to believe; but the narrative teaches differently. It is said of her—1st. She heard him. 2nd. Whose heart the Lord opened that she attended to the words spoken of by Paul, and when she was baptized and her household, she besought us saying, If ye have judged me faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us.—Acts xiv. 14, 15. What can more beautifully accord with the words of our text than Lydia's case? She heard the gospel or the voice of Jesus, and in proportion as she believed her heart was so opened that she attended to the things that were spoken of by Paul. What those things were is spoken of in verse fifteen; the very first things Jesus appointed in the commission for the penitent believer to do. Jesus went into her and supped with her by accepting of her hospitality to his brethren and she will sup with him forever. It is as plain to say the Lord opened her heart when his Holy Spirit by the Gospel induced her to open it, as to say the man who went to a friend's house at midnight to borrow five loaves, opened the door because he remained knocking and reasoning with the inmate till he persuaded him to rise and open it. Many like Lydia, who hear the voice are so moved by his dying love as at once to let him in, while others are harder to be persuaded. But Jesus is so anxious to save the lost that he pities and spares them and waits long to be gracious. He is not willing that any should perish. Oh! how sad that so many disregard the pleading voice of Jesus until he leaves them to die in their sins! There is joy in heaven among the angels when even one sinner repents.

Jesus not only knocks at the door of the unconverted, but also at the door of his own

people's hearts. Indeed this was addressed to those whom He loved, rebuked and chastened. They had become lukewarm and were in danger of being cast off by Christ, but He earnestly sought an entrance into their hearts. And how true this is to-day of many; they are neither cold nor hot. Jesus now knocks at their hearts and wants to enter and rule them. He makes "your work" an index to character and will reward every man according to his work. Jesus knocks at our hearts by the many opportunities he gives us of doing good. When we really consider the matter we are surprised at the number and variety of those opportunities. They knock at the door, they plead with us to let them in. Jesus still seeks and saves the lost, and wants all men to know it. Never since the Apostles' day did the gospel spread among the nations as it does to-day, and Jesus wants us to take part in the great work of spreading the light of life both at home and abroad. To do this as he wills requires labor and self-denial and sacrifice. But the possibilities are around us to let them into our hearts. Duties of every kind knock for admission. Christ may come down to sup with us and is anxious to take us up to heaven with him.

## Original Contributions.

## THE WORLD'S NEED OF THE CHRIST.

GEO. MANIFOLD.

How many of the teeming millions of our burdened humanity are unconscious of their supreme need. This is a sad fact. The heathen, as a rule, do not realize their lost condition. Their life is a living death, without God, without Christ, without hope, wondering, groping in worse than midnight darkness, their surroundings are truly pitiable. As sheep in the wilderness, though utterly lost and in great peril, never seek the shepherd, so myriads of our race for whom Christ died, wander blindly in gross darkness. If the lost are found, it is because the shepherd is seeking the sheep.

There was once an old man diseased and worn and literally clothed in rags, who sat by the wayside, an object of pity, desiring alms; yet he never uttered a word, but simply sat there. One day a gentleman passing by was struck by his abject misery, but as no appeal was made, he passed on. Yet, haunted by the man's woe-begone appearance, he came back and asked, "Are you in want?" And the old man said, "Oh, sir, I am sick, and cold, and hungry." Then said the gentleman, "Why don't you ask something?" And the old man stretching out his wasted hands, and looking at his rag-covered body, said, "I am pleading with a thousand tongues." His misery was begging beyond all words.

The above fully describes how the heathen are begging, piteously pleading in language more eloquent than words for Christ and his glorious gospel. Will it fall on dull ears and on unresponsive and stony hearts? Rather