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The Bible as Literature and Much More.

ROBERT STUART MACARTHUR.

XIX

(Continued from last issue.)

Remarkable Reticence.

There is in the Bible a similar reticence regarding the personal appearance of Christ. Not one word is said as to his height, the color of his hair, and eyes, or description of any of his features. This absence is truly remarkable; it seems to set aside all the natural instincts of his devout followers and of his inspired evangelists. We know that nothing more interests average hearers or readers than accounts of the personal characteristics of leaders of thought, representatives of fashion, authors of movements, and founders of religion. Why is the Bible so strangely silent on all these topics? We are not to know Christ after the flesh; we are to know him in a higher, a holier and a diviner relation. Mr. Watters, in his little volume entitled, "Claims of the Bible," quotes Mrs. Jamerson and Lady Eastlake, who gave this explanation of the silence of the evangelists regarding the personal appearance of Christ: "He whom all races were to call brother, was not to be too closely associated with the particular lineaments of any one race. East and West, Byzantium and Rome, Spain, Italy, Germany and every Christian nation might imagine the form of the Son of Man not altogether unaccordant with their respective ideas of beauty, dignity and love." No doubt there is force in this explanation. Christ was to be the brother of every believer. He may be more to every man now than he was to his own mother, except so far as she believed in him as her Lord; and more to every one than he was to his own brothers, except so far as they believed in him as their divine Saviour.

One is struck also by the remarkable reticence of the Bible regarding the mysterious experiences of Lazarus during the four days that he spent in the grave. Why on his return was he thus silent? How the village folk would have gattered about him had he talked of the wonderful experiences through which he may have passed! He might have been the wonder of the entire country, calling attention to himself, rather than giving honor to his Lord. Tennyson in his "In Memoriam" gives us a wonderful picture of how the neighbors met from house to house, how the streets were filled with joyful sound, how a solemn gladness crowned the purple brows of Olivet, as the people gazed upon a man raised up by Christ. But all else remains unrevealed; "something sealed the lips of that evangelist."

A similar illustration of the reticence and of the practicality of biblical teaching is seen in the method of the apostles in discussing their own exalted experience, and in their treatment of profound doctrines. Nowhere outside the Bible can be found a nobler specimen of literature in the discussion of a great doctrine than the Apostle Paul has given us in his teaching of the resurrection in first Corinthians the fifteenth chapter. This chapter will ever hold its place in the front rank of the divinest elements of inspired literature. We have here a connected, elaborate and unanswerable argument for doctrine of the resurrection—the very foundation truth of Christianity.

We have here resistless logic, majestic rhetoric, and lofty emotion in rhetorical expression. This chapter is an oratorio of triumph. It is resplendent as a gleam of light from heaven; it is musical as a strain from angelic harps; it is rhetorical, musical and spiritually inspiring and sublime. We have in this chapter inimitable beauty of thought, together with unequalled power of argument. But the apostle turns at once from sublime doctrine to practical duty. The volume marries doctrine and duty. This glorious chapter closes with the words: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abiding in the work of the Lord." There is thus evermore a practical application in all the apostle's greatest arguments. His discussion of his own wonderful visions and revelations from the Lord follows the same method of teaching. On this occasion he was in a condition of literal ecstasy, not knowing whether he was in the body or out of the body; he was as one caught up to the third heaven. Observe his remarkable and commendable reticence regarding these marvellous experiences. Put over against his sublime reticence the puerile loquacity of Mohammed when describing his pretended exaltation and divine revelation. No doubt Mohammed's epilepsy had not a little to do with his visions. No doubt he was at times moved with a rapturous vehemence of emotion. No doubt his whole frame was violently swept with paroxysms during these experiences; and no doubt he even seemed to hear strange voices, impelling him to noble services. But his garrulity reduces all to puerility compared with the noble silence, the majestic reticence, of the apostle to the Gentiles. In all this apostle's allusions to paradise, he makes it not a theme for personal discussion, nor to gratify vain curiosity, but he mentions it only to commend his apostleship to those who called it in question. He used this exalted experience merely to advance the cause to which he had consecrated his life. He had not desired to attract attention to himself; but his whole purpose was to honor his Lord and Master and to advance the cause of truth among men.

Not otherwise was it with the Apostle Peter, in the description which he gives of that great and awful time when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and when the Lord shall come as a thief in the night. There were abundant opportunities in these allusions for gratification of curiosity, speculation and selfish ambition. We ask speculative questions to this hour regarding all these events. We cannot hold the thought of the people to practical duty when speculations of this character are rife in the community. But although the Apostle Peter is discussing these tremendous events, events which have occupied the thought of modern science as well as spiritual theology—he turns immediately from the majestic description which he has given, to the practical duty he desires to emphasize, saying, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of person ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." (2 Pet. 3:11.)

This method of teaching is never forgotten in any part of the New Testament. All contained in the Scripture has its practical uses. This statement is true even of the long genealogies which often excite the amusement of thoughtless readers of the New Testament. These genealogies established the family relationship of great historic characters; they also often proved the fulfillment of solemn and glorious prophecies. Probably no part of our body is meaningless; it has its place in the economy of our physical life and growth. Not otherwise is it with all parts of the word of God. Let us learn the lesson in our Christian experience taught by this method of biblical revelation. Let us rejoice that doctrines are the foundation of practice, and that all doctrine should be incarnated in daily duty. Thus it will be seen that every part of God's Word is of immediate service in the development of the Christian life. Let us rejoice in all the revelations of God's Holy Word, and let us see also that, as in experience, in oratory, in authorship, often the strongest elements of character are seen in reticence rather

than in expression, so the fullest proofs of revelations are often to be seen in the silence rather than in the utterances of God. Christ dared to be silent in the presence of his foes; so the Bible often dares to be silent in the presence of its bitterest critics. It is still true, and will be true evermore, that while speech is often silvery, silence is often golden.

Within The Lines.

Reminiscences of The Civil War.

By MRS. M. M. HUNTINGTON.

III.

"Thou oh God has proved us: Thou has tried us as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net: Thou hadst affliction upon our loins: Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads. We went through fire, and through water, but were broughtest out into wealthy places."

When Jeff Davis first visited Atlanta there was a perfect ovation, and I heard many men say nothing could induce them to deprive their children of the sight of one of America's greatest men; and when Hood took command there was a wonderful cheerfulness and activity, showing that with all their disasters they still trusted in the wisdom and power of their leaders.

To return to the auction house—one day when I found my way to the desk of the man who had charge of my goods he noticed my feeble looks and, giving me a chair, brought me a glass of water, saying: "This is no place for you; leave your son and we will set the business all right for you." Some things not sold were stored away there to be burned when Sherman left the city. I was completely exhausted when my business was closed up. For though kind friends, both northern and southern, rendered me all the assistance in their power, they could do but little. I was so closely watched.

I planned to rest a week or two and then get a pass to the town of Marietta and remain there until the Union forces passed. We found Atlanta would be besieged, and it seemed horrible to think of staying in a besieged city. My friends endeavored to get a pass for me, but without avail. Then I made an arrangement with an acquaintance: to take us by private conveyance, and for a week was all packed and ready to start, expecting and hoping to be called up any night, but to my sore disappointment that plan failed. Once more I made an effort to leave by going south to Montgomery, thence on through Mississippi, and on joining the river to take a transport up. I took the night train, with my family and some friends, among them Mr. Banks, who accompanied us to the depot. We were comfortably seated when he entered saying that we would not be allowed to leave, as an officer and a squad of men were at the door to take us off the train. There was nothing to do but to turn back. The officer in charge said he had orders to examine my baggage. Mr. B., on hearing of my arrest, thinking that something of that kind would follow, had quietly put my trunk in a wheelbarrow and started for home. The officer went up to the house, had my trunk opened and removed all its contents, but found nothing. A scrap of paper containing the last words from my husband I had not the heart to destroy, and I laid it in a fan box under the paper lining. He opened the box but did not see it, and when I enquired what he thought to find, he replied that I was known to be in correspondence with my husband, and their intention was to prevent me carrying news to the enemy. I assured him that I did not know that my husband was among the living, for I never had any intelligence from him. Evidently he did not credit my assertion, but not being able to prove anything he left me in peace at Mr. Banks.

The first of July found Sherman at our very gates. That morning we were told that Gen. Johnson would not make a stand at Atlanta; that in his opinion it could not be made successfully, but that he would evacuate the city with all the Confederate forces. We dared not show how thankful we were except by silent hand pressure and tearful eyes, for many of the ser-