

The Living Christ.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE LOVE WE LIVE BY" III.

Then never shrink from deep devotion, because you fear its trials or its sacrifice. Paul in martyrdom, was unspeakably happier than God's half-hearted servants. For there is all this difference in the two phases of Christian experience. The one is the narrow way in the lowlands, full of pitfalls, and darkened with fogs and shadows, through which we painfully travel: the other is high on the mountain-top, far above the cloud level,—still the narrow way, indeed, and often strewn with crosses; but the blue sky is above, and the fresh, clear air is around us, and we journey on with the Friend so much dearer than a brother perpetually at our side; and his smile is the light of life, and his voice sweeter than angels' music.

Neither let us think that this would lead to idle contemplation, or the mysticism of monastic ages. There is no mysticism about it. It is eminently practical, and so plain and childlike that a child will best comprehend it. It is but taking Christ at his word, and living as He had bid us live. Let us put aside all prejudices and preconceived theories, and take up our Bible as if it had just come down to us from heaven, and we shall see that these simple truths are on every page. They do, indeed, strike at the very root of pride. It is deeply humiliating thus to renounce all our self will and self-reliance, and acknowledge that Christ must not only save us from everlasting ruin by his own free grace, but must keep us every moment by the same unmerited help. We are willing, or perhaps necessitated, to let Him place us in the way of salvation; but, once there, we consider that the rest is our part. "Now," we say, "we must go to work to make ourselves holy. We will be very good and diligent and self-denying, and we shall find the reward of our labours." True, we may not say this in conscious self-righteousness; but it is very difficult to keep out some little feeling of merit. True, we mean, by our goodness and diligence and self-denial, to please our Maker; and, in a certain sense, He is doubtless pleased with it,—but yet, says Paul "show I unto you a more excellent way." Let us rely upon Christ to enable us to please God every hour, with precisely the same simplicity and humility that we rely upon Him to keep us from eternal destruction, continually realizing—

"In my hand no price I bring, Simply to thy cross I cling,

and we shall find his promise of perfect peace will stand for ever sure. In Him is all we need; and He is ever ready to give it us, if we will but consent to take it as a gift: we can never claim it as a reward. Is not this want of humility one reason why we make so little progress in the divine life? Is not the language of our souls, even in their earnestness, not so much "God be merciful to me a sinner," as "God be merciful to me who am tolerably good already, but who want to be much better?" If so, our first step must be downward, not upward. We first humble ourselves, before God will exalt us.

If we desire an exalted sphere, let us pray Him to fit us for it, and, if He sees best to give it to us, He Himself will show us the road to it in time. Just now we have only to trust in Him, to cling to him, and to do each moment, with all our energy, the work He sets before us. And, as we contend with the evil and wickedness that is in the world, let us do it in meekness and love; very patient with it, because He has been so patient with us,—remembering, as we see its opposition and pride and unbelief, that all this is in our hearts, and if it has ever been subdued, to God, not us, be all the glory.

This be our life-work, in whatever way He shall direct us. We may not be able to do all we wish; but let us do what we can, and let us do it now. In the body of Christ there are different members, and all members have not the same office; but each, in our vocation and ministry, must serve Him faithfully.—Let us ask ourselves, each day, what we can do that day for Him, and set about it without delay. Half the schemes for good in this world come to nothing because of our protracted hesitation. We wonder if it would really be best to undertake them; if there is not some possibility of their failing of their end; if,

after all, we shall be able to carry them through,—and, while we are considering, the opportunity is lost. What our hands find to do, let us do with our might, and leave the result to God. But let us remember that we are to labour according to God's will; and if we doubt what is his will, we shall, after earnest and faithful prayer, always find it indicated in his providence. What He wants us now to do is to-day's duty.

And when we are all, each one of us, Christians after his Christ-like pattern, his church will go forth conquering and to conquer. The kingdoms of the world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Let us pray then, first, to-day, that He may reign triumphant in our hearts. Let us all turn to the living Christ, who can do more for us than we ask or think, and clinging to Him in love, let us never let Him go. He is with us now, risen from the dead. He is ready to aid and bless us. Oh do not let us turn back from Him to our old life of doubt and wavering, and weary pain! If the wish is awakened in our soul to be ever in his presence, let us go to Him this moment, and ask Him what to do, and how to feel, believing that He is more ready to hear than we are to pray. He will give us realization of his love, and convictions of duty. Let us follow those convictions implicitly: let us ask Him every day to teach us more, and help us more; and we shall soon say, with Paul, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

Correspondence.

"His Appearing, and His Kingdom."

TWELFTH ARTICLE.

Some of the readers of the Messenger may wonder why my last article was numbered the eleventh. The explanation is that the ninth and tenth were not published in this paper, I now send a portion of the next two articles (Nos. 9 and 10), and shall conclude the series next week.

Many persons have been brought up in the belief that the promise, "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord" (Heb. ii. 14; Is. xi. 9), means that all nations and tribes will hear and believe the gospel; that such passages as Ezek. xxxvi. 8-38, taken in connection with Rom. xi. 25, etc., are prophetic of the conversion of the Jews, after the general evangelization of the Gentiles; and that all this is to take place before the second coming of Christ. But that this is "mere theory" may be proved both negatively and positively.

The negative proof is that the scriptures nowhere indicate such a sequence of events. Is the doctrine to be found in the 11th chapter of Isaiah,—or the 35th,—or the 49th,—or the 72nd Psalm, or the 4th of Micah,—or in any of the passages commonly deemed appropriate to be read at missionary meetings? Not one of them says anything of the kind. Who will bring forward proof to the contrary? It cannot be done. That the Lord Jesus Christ will be king over all the earth,—that all nations will serve Him and call Him blessed,—that there will be joy and gladness and peace and goodwill among men,—that the earth will be filled with the glory of God,—all this and much more that is well fitted to make the christian rejoice in hope, is clearly foretold. But that our Lord will come again to the earth and set up His kingdom before all these things are fulfilled, is just as plainly to be learned from the prophetic word ("to which ye do well that ye take heed.") Read carefully 2 Peter i. 16-21).

"When the Son of man comes, will He find the faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8.) No, not on the part of mankind in general; for "as they were in the days before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came,—so shall be also the coming of the Son of man." Some of those then living will be "taken" up out of the world, to be at rest with all the saved; while others will be "left" in the world to have their portion with the unbelievers. (Matt. xxiv. 37-42; 2 Thess. i. 7-10.) Instead of a rapid growth of true religion in the world until all shall know the Lord, we are led to expect, in the latter days, an unprecedented development of iniquity (See 2 Tim. iii. 13; 2 Thess. ii. 3-12;

Rev. xiii. 4-14, etc.) "When they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory," all the tribes of the earth, far from being ready to welcome Him as their long-expected King, will mourn and wail because of Him in despairing terror, (Matt. xxiv. 30; Rev. i. 7.)

Let those who desire further proof read Acts iii. 17-21. Peter called upon his unbelieving countrymen to repent and turn, so that the Lord might send forth Jesus Christ (the second time) who was before appointed for them, but who must remain in heaven until the set time for the restoration of all things,—the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. That period is commonly called the Millennium, (See Is. lxx. 17-25). Now since it is said that Christ is to be in Heaven until the Millennium, how can we suppose that his second advent will be deferred till after that time?

Again, the belief in the Millennium—"the thousand years of peace"—is largely based upon Rev. xx. 4-7, where we are told that the faithful will live and reign with Christ a thousand years; and we learn from Rev. v. 10; Is. xxiv. 23; Mic. iv. 7; Rev. ii. 26, 27; 1 Cor. vi. 2; Ps. ii. 8, 9; Dan. vii. 18, 22-27, and other passages that Christ and the redeemed will reign on the earth. It must be evident then, that they will come down to the earth before they can reign on the earth. (Zech. xiv. 5; 1 Thess. iii. 13; Jude 14.) What a day of glory and of terror will be that "great and notable day of the Lord!"

"The night is far spent," wrote the great apostle,—"the day is at hand." If this was true then, how much more true after eighteen centuries of darkness! "Now is our salvation nearer." How near, who can tell? But the darkness will be greatest just before the rising of the Sun.—There will be a period of prodigious impiety, and of "trouble such as never was since there was a nation" (Dan. xii. 1), whose history is foretold in a series of appalling pictures in "the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ." But of this I cannot now speak particularly. Those who wish may read of it in such passages as Luke xxi. 25, 26; Ezek. chap. xxxviii. 8 to chap. xxxix. 29; Rev. chaps. ix., xi., xiii., xvi., xvii., xviii., xix.; 2 Thess. ii. 3-12; Jer. xxx. 9-9; Dan. vii. 19-27, etc.

To the Lord's people, however, the terrors of those days need cause no alarm (2 Thess. i. 7; ii. 2-8;) for they will then be at "rest," having been counted "worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke xxi. 36.)—"caught up to meet the Lord in the air," that they may come with Him to the earth, and "with Him be manifested in glory" (Col. iii. 4), when He comes "out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." (Is. xxvi. 21), and to establish His own glorious kingdom.

The circumstances of His appearing, with the display of His almighty power in the deliverance of repentant Israel and the discomfiture of their enemies, are detailed in many passages of Scripture, to which the reader can turn for himself. Such are Rev. i. 7; Matt. xxv. 31; Jude 14; Zech. chap. xii. 10 to chap. xiv. 15; Mal. iv. 1-3; Rev. xix. 11-21; etc. It is necessary to pass to my second topic—THE KINGDOM OF THE LORD.

Luke 13th, 1879.

LUKE.

For the Christian Messenger. Luthardt's Apologetical Discourses.

Translated from the German for the Christian Messenger, by Prof. D. M. Welton.

FOURTH DISCOURSE.

The Creation of the World.

The answer to the question concerning God is determinative also of that concerning the world. Is God a living, personal God, then the world was created by him, and this creation is a free act of his power, wisdom, and love. This is the fundamental position of the christian contemplation of the world. As soon, however, as we take this position, we are met by all the objections which the Natural Sciences and a natural way of regarding things have started against the religious, and especially against the Biblical representation of the world. A succession of questions and considerations has hereby been called forth, upon which many minds are now engaged,

and which often exert an unsettling influence upon the masses of the people.

The conflict between the Natural Sciences and the religious contemplation of the world is especially characteristic of modern times. It marks the recent progress which has been made in Physics and Chemistry, in Astronomy and Geology. Since the telescope and microscope disclosed new worlds, since Herschel and Rosse resolved the distant nebulae into starry systems, since Ehrenberg discovered the infusorial world, a new way of looking at this visible world has begun to show itself, and the human mind has become possessed of a lofty self-confidence which believes that neither remoteness in space nor obscurity in time any longer conceals anything from it. Investigations in these lines of study have led to an entirely natural world-contemplation which appeals to matters of fact, and rests its claim on palpable certainty, hereby producing a strong impression; for palpable things ever make according to their nature a strong impression upon our mind. On the other hand it is characteristic of religious faith that it does not restrict itself simply to one province of the inner intellectual life, but traverses the whole circle of human thought, and seeks to bring it into unity with itself. It is however opposed to the nature of the human mind to tolerate contradictory processes of thought within itself. In this way discord has manifoldly come into the inner intellectual life, and there has arisen therefrom a feeling of uncomfortable vacillation and uneasy insecurity, which knows not whether and in what degree it shall make concessions, and hereby perhaps again restore the disturbed harmony of the inner intellectual world. Even Schleiermacher feared that the results of Natural Science would be prejudicial not only to Theology but to evangelical Christianity generally. "I have a presentiment," he writes to Lucke in 1829 (Theol. Studien und Kritiken II, 489 f.) "that we shall be obliged to get along without much of what many are accustomed to regard as inseparably bound up with the existence of Christianity. I will not speak of the six days creative work, but of the idea of creation; how long will this idea be able to hold against the might of that world-contemplation which has sprung from scientific research? And our New Testament miracles,—for I will not speak first of those of the Old Testament—how long will these continue, though supported by worthier and more convincing evidence than was formerly adduced in the times of visionary Euclopedia. What, then, my dear friend, will be the issue of these tendencies? I shall not myself live to see the time, for I am soon to rest in the quiet of the grave. But you, my friends, and your contemporaries, what do you intend to do? Will you intranch yourselves behind these outworks and allow yourselves to be blockaded by Science? The bombardment of derision will harm you but little. But the blockade, the complete starving of all sciences! will it not then, pressed by you, even while you are so fortified, hoist the flag of unbelief? Shall the difficulty of history: christianity with barbarism and science with faith, be thus solved?" So wrote Schleiermacher. Now he rests and Lucke also to whom he wrote, and we are here and have the work to do which they left to us undone. What shall we now say? Does the matter really stand in so perilous a condition as Schleiermacher pictured and as many persons, indeed, still think?

When the Israelites approached the promised land, they sent spies before to search out the land and people and bring back a report. They came back dispirited and their report had a dispiriting effect also upon the army. Only two, Joshua and Caleb, were courageous and requested that, committing themselves and their cause to God, they should go up and possess the land; and God in due time rewarded their courage and put the timid to shame. So Schleiermacher has also made a flying excursion into the land of the Natural Sciences and returned with a despondent heart. Shall we also for this reason be despondent? In my opinion no sufficient ground exists for alarm.

The greatest disputes on earth arise from the displacing of dividing lines, and much that is complicated can be settled if only the proper boundaries are retained. Keep to your bounds, and

live in peace. ("Schiedlich, friedlich"). The first and most necessary thing here is that the dividing line between the two realms we have now to consider be kept clear and distinct. Hereby the main point is already gained. Religion and Theology have truths concerning which Natural Science knows nothing, and which therefore it has no right to deny; and again Natural Science takes cognizance of matters with which Religion has nothing to do, and concerning which Theology has nothing to say. And when both deal with the same subject, it is with its different sides, Religion says to us that God gives us our daily bread; Natural Science tells us how the corn grows in the field. Can it now be said that these things are inconsistent with each other? Both must be conceded, but each in its place. The recognition of boundaries is the way of peace. Even when there is uncertainty respecting boundaries conflict is the result. But under such circumstances it is not best to rush immediately into war, but rather to ascertain the right boundaries and established them. This may cost time and demand patience and labor. And it may be that we shall have to content ourselves with not being able to decide all questions at once. But what we are not able to settle now, may be safely left to the future.

As an example of a question in which it is especially important to distinguish between the two provinces of Science and Religion, is the one we have now to consider, namely, that of the Creation itself. This question is at bottom a decisive one. It lies however within the sphere of Religion. For the conception of creation pertains to Religion and not to Natural Science. Natural science may teach us concerning the outward form and order, but the fact itself that God created the world, is taught us, not by Natural Science, but by Religion. On this point Natural Science can say nothing. However far she may go back in her investigations and study the becoming cosmical structures, she must at last stand still by matter, by life, and by laws. Whence comes this matter, this life, and the laws which control it, she does not know. For she ever begins her inquiries by supposing matter to exist already. If asked to explain the origin of matter, she leaves the ground of sensible reality and passes into the realm of speculation or faith. In this way Natural Science ceases to be Natural Science, and becomes Philosophy or Religion. Whether matter is to be regarded as created by God, or as eternal and proceeding from itself, or whether the question of its origin receive no attention whatever—is all the same to Natural Science; for it begins only with the existence of material being. In this question therefore there is no conflict between Natural Science and Faith, and can be none. If there is conflict anywhere, it is a conflict between opposing world-contemplations, which are a matter of faith—being at bottom the same—whether that faith be a philosophical or a religious one. What appears to be a conflict with science is much more a conflict with the Philosophy of the disciples of Natural Science.

ORIENTAL CITY GATES.—In 1834 Dr. Thomson resided for several months in Jaffa, and, to pass away the time, frequently came out in the afternoon "to the gate through the city, and prepared his seat in the street." There the governor, the cad, and the elders of the people assembled daily, "in a void place," and held an extemporaneous divan, at which affairs of every kind were discussed and settled, with the least possible ceremony. But recently from America, Dr. Thomson was greatly amused with this novel open-air court conducted amidst the din, confusion, and uproar of a thronged gateway—men, women, and children jostling each other, horses prancing, camels growling, donkeys braying, as they passed in and out of the gate; but nothing could interrupt the proceedings, or disturb the judicial gravity of the court. The scene, with all its surroundings, was wholly Oriental, and withal had about it an air of remote Scriptural antiquity which rendered it doubly interesting.—Dr. J. F. Husar, in Harper's Magazine for December.

Is it either natural or scriptural to expect a congregation of new born Christians to take care of themselves?