

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XXVI., No. 39.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, September 28, 1881.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XLV., No. 39.

Poetry.

The Corn and the Lilies.

Said the Corn to the Lilies,
"Press not near my feet;
You are only idlers,
Neither Corn nor Wheat.
Does one earn a living
Just by being sweet?"

Naught answered the Lilies,
Neither yea nor nay,
Only they grew sweeter
All the livelong day.
And at last the Teacher
Chanced to come that way.

While His tired disciples
Rested at His feet,
And the proud Corn rustled,
Bidding them to eat.
"Children," said the Teacher,
"The life is more than meat."

"Consider the Lilies,
How beautiful they grow!
Never king had such glory,
Yet no toil they know."
Oh, happy were the Lilies,
That He loved them so!

His Benefits.

PSALM 103: 2.

Uncounted as the stars that thread the darkness
With interlacing rays,—
They brighten in our lives; we feel their beauty,
And yet forget to praise.

Father in Heaven, forgive, and for these blessings,
These benefits of thine,
Give grateful hearts, that shall rejoice in sunshine;
In shadow not repine.

Beneath the drooping cloud the grain is ripening
For garners in the sky;
Forget not that He watches till the harvest
With never slumbering eye.

Never a soul has yet been found so lonely
But had some blessing left;
Never a heart entirely forsaken
And of all life bereft.

Then, O my soul, recount the benefits
God-given to thy lot,
And never more, however sharp the trial,
Let them be quite forgot.
GEORGE L. HEATH.

Religious.

Lessons of Temptation.

BY REV. WAYLAND HOYT, D. D.

That was a very evil bargain which Esau made with Jacob about his birthright, as Esau found out when it was too late. Backward sight is always better than forward sight. Bargains of just such a nature are being made by men and women every day, and big with the same bad consequences. That evil bargain has taught me two lessons of temptation. They are these:—

Every human weakness has its hour of temptation, and the critical temptation to make an evil bargain will strike us precisely in that part of our nature where we are the weakest.

Jacob was the sort of a man who could have stood hunger vastly better than Esau. It is almost impossible to conceive of a temptation like this making much impression upon him. He would never barter a real advantage for a little food. It was not in his make to do it. It did not belong to his disposition. He could not be tempted, as he was—and there he could yield most sadly, as he did—on the side of his cupidity, of his avarice, of his determination to seize the main chance. But he could not be tempted on the more sensual and physical side of faintness and of hunger. He did not live chiefly in that realm. It was not so hard for him to keep his body under, because he did not have so much of a body as Esau had.

But Esau is the very child of the sensual. He is most body and least mind. He is immersed in the senses,

He likes nothing better than the exciting hunt upon the mountain side. He revels in a mere physical enjoyment; the play of the physical senses is his delight. And so hunger, physical inconvenience, would be a much more tormenting thing to him than it ever could have been to Jacob.

As it was with Esau, so it is with everyone. The critical temptation will strike precisely in that part of the nature which is weakest. If the devil ever gets you into the making of an evil moral bargain he will build his counter and swing his scales right there; over against that side of you where you are weakest.

Double guard, then, that point with watchfulness and prayer. If you are passionate, guard there. If you are constitutionally tricky, guard there. If you are stingy, give until it hurts you, guard there. If you are indolent, guard there. If you are procrastinating, guard there. If you are impatient of details, set yourself about details; guard there. If you are unspiritual, be determined to become spiritual; guard there. If you are brooding and melancholy, force yourself to look upon the brightest side; guard there. The devil will never fish where there are no fish to bite. As Esau went down on his weakest side you will go down on yours, if you go down at all: which may God forbid.

Here is another lesson. That you may be safe from evil bargains, beware of the "Tyranny of the Present."

In Esau's case, much of the advantage belonging to his birthright was in the future. Into the inheritance, the government, the priesthood, he could not enter until his father should have died. All was promised him, but he could not possess it now. The substantial birthright was beyond; it was chiefly a shadowy birthright which was in the present.

But there was something in the present which was very real. That unsuccessful hunt was in the present. That mess of pottage which Jacob was preparing was in the present. Its savory smell was in the present.

And over against these, far off in the distance, and draped in mists because of the distance, were the emoluments of his birthright.

And when Jacob, the cunning and mean-souled, had no pity for his brother's weariness and hunger, but would sell that which he should have given; and when he named for price but those far-away and apparently unreal things, the Present overmastered and overswept the Future, and Esau made his bargain. The Present captured him, and then, in thus allowing himself to be made the slave of the Today, he lost his kingship over the Tomorrow.

It is the old question which must reappear so constantly; which must reappear so long as men and women are thrust into probationary lives: the question between the Now and the Hereafter. This question meets life at its threshold; it stays with life until the last earthly breath is drawn.

What will you be: a grand true man or woman, strong in character, lifted in life, fixed in faith; like Abraham, the friend of God, like John, the beloved disciple, like Paul, the Christian warrior, like the Master, anxious but to do the Father's will? Then you cannot eat the present pottage of self-gratification, of indulgence in hungry sin.

What will you do: something worthy of yourself, something beneficent towards others, something that shall make your life in this desert world what the shade of the seventy palms and the springs of water were to the tired Israelites at Elim? Then you cannot eat the present pottage of indolence, and carelessness, and misuse of time, and thoughtlessness of opportunity and a craving selfishness.

Where will you go? for go somewhere you must. These swiftly-passing years are pushing you to some goal; the end, the consummation of your life is nearer than it ever was before. Where will you go? To heaven? To its peace, to

to its purity, to its sinlessness, to its Christ? Then you cannot eat the present pottage of irreligion, of prayerlessness, of refusal of right being and of right doing by the power of the Holy Spirit; then you cannot eat the present pottage of the willing feeding of your soul on sin. "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth."

If only there were not so many like Esau; if only there were not so many so eager to barter all that is best and highest in two worlds for the pottage of the moment.

The Order of the Commandments.

The order of the precepts is suggestive. First come our duties to God, and then those to our fellow-men. As in the Lord's Prayer we are taught to think first of God's name and kingdom before we ask anything for ourselves, so in the Decalogue our obligations towards God are set before us, and then those under which we lie to our fellow-men. The earliest thing to be sought by any one is to be right with God, and that will bring him into harmony with men. Religion is the foundation of morality. The first table of the law is the root and trunk of the tree; the second is the outbranching, efflorescence, and fruitage thereof. Our neighbor has a God-given right to our love, but before we can acknowledge that right, we must acknowledge the God who gave it; and, though there may be apparent exceptions in the history of individuals, it will be found that all communities which have thrown off allegiance to God have been cruel and oppressive to men; while it is just as true that they who study to obey the first four commandments, will be impelled, as if by some inner necessity, to seek to comply with the other six. They cannot stop with the first table, but they must go on to the second, and the Sabbath law forms the point of transition from the one to the other; for in it, while reserving a day for himself, the Lord teaches all who observe it to have a tender regard for the comfort and rest of others. And in this respect, as furnishing a witness to man's need of periodic relief from labor, and leading all who receive it to think of the welfare of others, as well as for their own, the fourth commandment has an importance which is too seldom recognized. It is the link that binds the love of our neighbor to the love of our God; and if that link should be permitted to be broken, the poor working-man would be the first to feel the oppression which would ensue.

But the order in which the several precepts of both tables follow each other, is at once strictly philosophical and richly suggestive. Our duties to God relate first to his being, second to his worship, third to his name, and fourth to his day; while our duties to our fellow-men have their starting point in the home, and then flow out to our neighbor, having regard first to his life, second to his other self, his wife, third to his property, and fourth to his general standing and position. The law begins with the state of the heart toward God, saying, "Thou shalt have no gods but me," involving therein all the other precepts regarding God; and it concludes with the state of the heart toward our fellow-man thus, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's;" and that involves in it all the other precepts concerning our neighbor. Thus the Decalogue spheres itself into full-rounded perfection, the spiritual nature of the law is vindicated, and the golden circlet that began in love to God is clasped and completed by that of love of man.—Taylor's Moses.

The chief properties of wisdom are, to be mindful of things past, careful of things present, provident of things to come.

Luthardt's Apologetical Discourses on the Fundamental Truths of Christianity.

(Translated from the German by Prof. D. M. Wellton.)

SEVENTH DISCOURSE.

Revelation.

Whoever believes in Jesus Christ, believes also in miracles. For Jesus-Christ is a miracle. He is not simply a product of natural antecedents and conditions. However much may be made of these, for every one who estimates the person and history of Jesus as they really were, even if he does not believe on him in the sense of the Christian Church, but looks upon him only as a kind of religious genius without equal—for every one who thus regards the person and history of Jesus, and yet attempts to explain them on natural grounds, there ever remains an innumerable host, who cannot look upon him as naturally produced, as one that can be understood as a simple product of natural suppositions and conditions, but must be traced beyond the limits of the natural to the ultimate fountain of all higher life, to God himself, and must be regarded as an immediate and new gift and act of God himself. And this is the true conception of a miracle, that it is a free act of God, which does not originate from the joint working of the forces and conditions of natural life, but proceeds from God into connection with the same. The coherence of natural life is not hereby sundered; but it receives something that inwardly dovetails into it. We say: Christ is a miracle,—is he on this account an act of arbitrariness? By no means. Much rather was he historically conditioned and demanded. History had reached the point when the Person and work of Jesus Christ were required. But history could not produce Christ and his work from itself, but it was necessary to receive them into itself. Jesus Christ is a moral necessity, but he is not a natural actuality, but a supernatural one. But the supernatural becomes natural, because it is a demand of the natural. The natural life creates the necessity, but not the solution of this necessity. This solution is an immediate act of God, something new; but while it is the appeasing of a necessity, it comes into close union with it. Thus miracle is not the rending of natural connexion, but the competition of it.

If this is true, however, of Jesus Christ, it is true of revelation as a whole. For Jesus Christ stands not isolated in history, he is not suddenly projected as a phenomenon in the same, but he is the goal of a long history before him, whose final result is himself. We call this history the sacred history, the revelation. He is the dominant idea of the whole. It aims at him from the beginning. It shares with his appearing an equal character of wonderfulness. And all miracles before and after him—they have their justification in this, that they stand in connexion with him, that they pertain to the entire history of the revelation—history, whose central point is himself.

Miracles are hereby morally conditioned. And herein Biblical miracles are distinguished from all others. They have nothing of the fantastic and fictitious and gratuitous of other miracles. One has only to compare our gospels with the apocrypha, or the life of Jesus with the life of Mohammed, to perceive the heaven-wide distinction between them. Niebuhr's critical understanding stood confessedly inferior to that of none other, and in the old Roman history he has reduced things to order, but he confessed: "As to miracles in the strictest sense, an impartial and keen-sighted natural philosophy is all that is required to show us that those which are related (in Roman history) are nonsensical; and we have only to compare genuine miracles with the legendary tales and pretended miracles of other religions to perceive what a different spirit lives in them."

In short, miracles are not an arbitrary act, but are morally conditioned, for they pertain to revelation.

What is the significance of miracles

for revelation? They are in the first place the most popular form of legitimation or proof, as they have always been demanded and always will be; they are palpable evidence that a higher power manifests itself in the history which respects the salvation of our souls. They are in the second place the external representation of the matter itself: miracles are a translation from the sphere of mind or spirit into the hieroglyphics of nature. Nature is a world of symbols. Miracles are the highest symbolism. The blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, &c.—was the answer of Jesus to the "Baptist. The ultimate purpose of Jesus was not the healing of the blind, the lame, the dumb, &c. But he would place spiritual miracles, the miracles of the spiritual and inner healing of men before the dim eyes of mortals in the symbolic language of his external works. And finally: miracles are an essential constituent of revelation itself. Jesus Christ is a miracle, for he is the revelation. We believe not simply on account of this miracle, we believe in the miracle that he himself is. And this miracle that he himself is, were a necessity, if we would be saved. We have already said that miracles are possible. Miracles are possible for revelation is possible. Revelation answers to the being and will of God, who is life and love, and it answers to our being and our necessity.

5. But whereby shall we know that revelation is genuine and true? All religions appeal to revelation. How can it be shown that Christianity, above all other religions, rests truly upon revelation? The question is not now concerning a comparison of Christianity with heathenism and Judaism. Further on I will speak of this. The question now is: by what evidence does it appear that Christianity is really a revelation and the truth?

Let us now permit the different witnesses for Christian truth to come forth and give their testimony. We have the testimony of the apostles. Their writings are stamped with the impress of truthfulness. They have wished to relate the truth. And what interest could they have had in not doing so? No one who deals in falsehood can speak as they have done. The spirit of soberness in them forbids also this supposition. They are not a crowd of blind visionaries and fanatics; they are men of sound senses and sound nerves. Renan may call Mary Magdalena an enthusiast, because he understands not such devotion to the person of Jesus Christ; but he must confess that the Galilean fishermen were cool, considerate men; and when Paul is charged with being a nervous visionary, the charge is simply ridiculous. Now Paul says of himself in the first place that he had wrought miracles. He appeals to the Corinthians in the most emphatic manner in order to confirm his apostolic authority, declaring that the "signs of an apostle," that is, miraculous proofs of his apostleship, were wrought among them. 2 Cor. x, 12; Rom. xv. 18, 19. In the next place all the apostles speak as from one mouth; we are witnesses of these things. "What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon, and our hands have handled—that declare we to you. And Luke, who had not seen these things himself, gives this assurance: I have traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed."

The central point of their testimony, however, is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is no fact of history which is better confirmed than this. Renan affirms: for this we are indebted to the excited imagination of Mary Magdalene. "Divine power of love—he exclaims;—holy moments, in which the passion of the fascinated senses gives to the world a resurrected God!" But we say: these are disgraceful words, and altogether unworthy of a historian. For in this light way of