

Sunday Reading.

For the Christian Messenger.

Psalm 34.—An Acrostic.

Among the peculiar characteristics of this wonderful Psalm, not the least striking is that it is in the form, in the original, of an Acrostic on the Hebrew alphabet. In a literal translation this could not, of course, be preserved. The following is an attempt to show by a paraphrase this peculiarity. The Hebrew alphabet contains but twenty-two letters, whereas there are twenty-six in English. The four additional letters are therefore appended to the Psalm, in the form of a "doxology."

DAVID.

- 1. At all times I Jehovah's name will bless, My mouth his goodness daily shall confess.
2. Boasting in Him shall be my sweet employ, The humble hearing this shall shout for joy.
3. Come magnify the Lord with me, O sing With me in concert,—praise our God and King.
4. Down in the dust I cried, when troubles rose; He heard, and saved me from my fears and foes.
5. Enshrouded in dark clouds, they looked to Him And were enlightened,—Love's bright beauteous beam Shone forth,—all shame and sorrow vanished like a dream.
6. Feeble and faint, with earnest cries and tears, This Poor Man prayed,—his cry Jehovah hears, And saved him out of all his troubles and his fears.
7. Gabriel the Great, the Angel of the Lord, Around the righteous keepeth watch and ward, With his bright squadrons, charged their souls to guard.
8. Happy are all who in Jehovah rest, Of His salvation, of His love possessed; O taste His goodness; be forever blest!
9. In Him delight ye saints; fear and adore, They know no want who have His boundless store.
10. Judged for their wickedness fierce tyrants may, Like hungry lions, howl for lack of prey; But those who fear the Lord shall never know dismay.
11. Kind is His voice—"Come children, come to me." Come learn His fear betimes, and happy be.
12. Lives there the man who does not long for rest, Long life to live, to be forever blest?
13. Make this your care, restrain th' unruly tongue, Guard well your lips, abhor deceit and wrong.
14. No evil practices allow,—do good, Seek peace, pursue it, let no vice intrude.
15. On all the righteous rests Jehovah's eye, His gracious ear is open to their cry.
16. Plagues whelm the wicked from Jehovah's frown, From them He hides His face, and cuts them down.
17. Quick is His ear to catch His children's cry, To save them out of all their troubles and His sigh.
18. Rejoice ye broken-hearted; He is near To save the contrite and dispel their fear.
19. Severe afflictions on the righteous fall, The Lord delivers them out of them all.
20. This wondrous word was by Jehovah spoken, "He keepeth all their bones, not one of them is broken."
21. Upon the wicked, who the righteous hate, Evil must fall, and make them desolate.
22. Vain is the help of man, but while Jehovah reigns, And over all His works His power maintains, His ransomed ones can never want, for He Will their defence and endless portion be.
We'll sound His praise, and raise His honours high; Jehovah reigns enthroned above the sky!
'X'alted over all He reigns supreme, Our souls exult in the exalted theme.
Ye seraphs sound his praise to endless days Mingling your music with our humble lays.
Z eal for his glory move our every tongue, And glory, honour, praise and power be forever sung.

Some years ago attractive curates were troubled with a superfluity of slippers. We are glad to see the ladies are turning their attention to more useful presents for their pastors. The other day the ladies of the parish presented their clergyman with a tricycle. They were anxious to give him some present which might afford him occasional recreation in his most often arduous duties, and also be a means of locomotion by which he might the more easily get about from place to place, and fulfill the many calls of duty which press so heavily upon his time and strength.—Eccelesiastical Gazette.

Let men laugh when you sacrifice desire to duty, if they will. You have time and eternity to rejoice in.

Our Lord's Baptism.

BY REV. H. BOOL.

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him," etc.—MATTHEW iii. 13-17.

It is a remarkable fact, my brethren, that baptism is the only doctrine that justifies our existence as a separate denomination. Take away this ordinance or change it and we are only congregationalists. Our prosperity, therefore, depends largely upon preaching and correctly teaching, believer's baptism. Our churches are set for the defence of this truth, and it is our distinguishing duty to make it known throughout the world.

And who among us does not realize that this doctrine is worthy of all the intelligence and feeling, all the labour and contention that has ever attended it? Never was precept more distinct, or duty plainer, than in relation to this ordinance; and what authority can be greater than that of Jesus?

If we look into our hearts, too, we shall find great satisfaction arising from the privilege of following our Saviour and from the favor of the Heavenly Father, for, in baptism, each child of God may hear the approval of heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

It is a false charity that seals our lips on this subject from fear of hurting another's feelings. If this ordinance be all we know and feel it to be, it is the greatest kindness to make it known to every one, and to seek to bring all into conformity with it. In this spirit I purpose to speak a while on the baptism of Jesus. Let me point to the circumstances of the case, and to inferences arising therefrom.

I. The circumstances of Christ's baptism. Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized. Whatever others may think of the expediency of the ordinance, Jesus knew it to be essential. He came two days' travel to be baptized of John. Jesus would not bend the circumstances, or change the ordinance, to make it convenient. His was a ready compliance with the requirements as they stood. Good Matthew Henry says, "Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan to teach us not to shrink from pain and travel, that we may have opportunity to draw near to God in an ordinance. We should be willing to go far rather than come short of communion with God." Many in those days who have come far, have realized most of the divine blessing. I speak not of geographical distance merely. Many professors are far off from Jesus in relation to baptism, by opinion, prejudice, disobedience, or indifference. They will have a long way to come, and it may be very rough; none among those who are dear to them by the ties of relationship may give them the least encouragement. They may even find that the spirit of persecution is not dead. Jesus trod the weary way alone, that His followers may never feel solitary, but realize His presence and sympathy.

Doubtless Jesus had reasons for coming to baptism. His presence honoured the ordinance for all time. We sometimes read in the newspapers of heads of families, prominent citizens, and ministers from other denominations, coming to baptism. What is this when compared with the record of my text? The King's Son is here; appointed heir of all things, to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess. Who will despise an ordinance thus honoured? Who need be ashamed to go where the Saviour's feet hath trodden?

Jesus would set an example to all His followers. We have a great disposition to do as others; but we are drawn by numbers rather than by character. People do not like to be conspicuous in duties which are unpopular. But surely if I find the Son of God here, I am safe though all the world stand aloof. The scorn and frowns of a multitude cannot trouble me while the opening heavens shine around.

It is exceedingly damaging to our interests to ignore the example of Jesus. The gospel is not embodied in a code of laws as much as in a person. We are exhorted in Scripture to look to the cross of Jesus for salvation, and to His example as our rule of life. If we are asked to give a reason for baptism it will be sufficient to point to the

Saviour as he comes up from the water of Jordan. It cannot be from want of light that people do not see him there though there must be clouds somewhat bear with me, ye who are standing by while, in relation to the matter, I ask you seriously to consider whether the darkness is not in your own hearts.

John, in humility, shrunk from baptizing one so much greater than himself, and forbade; but Jesus said, "Suffer it so to be now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Just then the Redeemer had commenced the work of substitution. He had taken man's nature, and was now bearing our iniquities; being founed in fashion as a man he humbled himself. He is not very explicit on the reasons for baptism; there was, however, something fulfilled. There are diversities of opinion on the propriety of it, but He knew that it will become Him thus to fulfill a righteousness.

Men in high position in the Episcopal Church say the Baptists are right in the ancient mode of the ordinance but, say they, it is unbecoming in the present state of society. At the commencement of His public life Jesus said to John "thus it becometh us;" and at the close of that life, with this ordinance unchanged, He commanded His disciples to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, and, saith He, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The testimony of other denominations on our views of believer's baptism is very strong. We are very glad they are frank enough to acknowledge it. They, however, reserve a thin veil to cover their disobedience, Jesus says "thus it becometh us;" they say "thus it does not become us."

The circumstances of the case, together with the language employed, compel us to affirm that Jesus was immersed by John in Jordan. I need not, at present, dwell upon the weighty evidence acknowledged in every direction that the word employed means to dip, or immerse. No other language will agree with the circumstances. Let us try it. We will read it thus:—"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan to John to be sprinkled by Him."

And Jesus when He was sprinkled went up straightway out of the water." Any one can see there is want of harmony here between the circumstances and the language. Such incongruity is the dissonance of error. Why go to the Jordan to sprinkle? When did we ever see our Pedobaptist friends leave their house of worship and gather at a river to sprinkle either infants or adults? Truth is harmonious, and this is seen very plainly in the various instances of believer's baptism given in the New Testament; the circumstances, when mentioned, never accord with any other method than immersion. The eunuch said to Philip, see here is water what doth hinder me to be baptized. Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and came up out of the water. John was baptizing in Aenon near to Salem because there was much water there. Believers are said to be buried with Christ in baptism unto death. You perceive these passages beautifully accord with immersion, and with that alone.

The events accompanying our Lord's baptism are very striking. The grandeur of the scene equals that of the transfiguration, with which it has been compared. Here each of the three divine persons in the glorious Trinity gives testimony to the ordinance. The Son submits by the approval of the Father, and the Spirit lights upon Him. The dove is the emblem of peace, and is indicative of that satisfaction of heart realised by all who faithfully follow their Lord. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing. There is agitation in the minds of many of God's people that will never be allayed, until they have shown their love to the Saviour in the waters of baptism.

II. Let us notice more particularly the inferences to be drawn from Christ's baptism. 1. First and foremost it may be affirmed that as long as the Bible and the Bible alone be the religion of Protestants, baptism, as we hold it, must prevail. Not only does it shine here with such radiance at the commencement, but it is luminous in the whole course of New Testament doctrine, and,

I may add, that its influence on the Christian mind is growing into the proportions of its Scriptural import. The bright future of our denomination, predicted by others, is dawning. The revising and publishing of the New Testament in England have done much to advance our cause. I care not what may have been the cause of the revision, in preparing it, the attention of the learned has been called to our views as never before. The old words of the dead language have not been translated in the new version; and I, for one, do not feel troubled in the least. I did not expect it. If learned men will not give the truth a living tongue to work with, it will put life into the dead, and the word baptism will, after a while, be as correctly understood as any other word having its root in the language of the ancients.

The christening of infants is falling into disuse, persons of learning are coming over to our ranks, and the testimony of scholars outside our churches is increasing in our favor. I am not surprised at this. It is but the natural consequence of greater inquiry into the character of Scripture teaching.

2. As Baptists, we should be faithful to our principles in working them out in our own lives, and in commanding them to others.

Immediately after the description of Christ's baptism we read, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." It has often been the same with the followers of Jesus; but we have not succeeded as He in standing firmly. If they have not been driven from their ground, some have been sadly weakened, which has rendered them but feeble followers of the Lord; others from want of Christian manliness have fallen out of the ranks. Here and there one has smothered his principles for a piece of bread (like Esau who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage), or strangled his baptismal vow to please a relative. A conscientious change of opinion must be respected; but the most that men can do is to pity the cowardice that so easily yields to the tempter.

Baptists make the greatest and most prominent profession; it is required that they be least sinful and most Christ-like. "Know ye not," says the Apostle, "that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death. Therefore we are buried with Him in baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

In commending the truth to others we should act with a single eye to the glory of God. Subordinate to this let us keep in view the interests of truth and the welfare of men's souls.

There can be no doubt that it is the duty of every believer in Jesus to be baptized, and it cannot be wrong to seek to bring all to obedience. There are wrong motives and wrong methods; but it is Christlike to teach the truth to our fellow-men. It, therefore, cannot but be right and kind to lead Christians of every name into fellowship with the Saviour in baptism; amid the brightness of the opening heavens, to hear the approval of our Father, and to receive the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. These privileges may be enjoyed by every believer who is baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

In conclusion, before we have the right to go with Christ in baptism, we must receive Him as our Saviour. If thou believest thou mayest be baptized. Without faith there can be no fellowship with Jesus in an ordinance, and we shall have no joy without love. The gospel must first be preached, then received, after this the test of sincerity. First receive Him as a Saviour, then copy His example. Find Him at the cross, follow Him in baptism, be faithful unto death.

Listen, once more, to the divine approval, spoken amid the radiance of heaven: "This is my beloved Son. My hearers, is that beloved Son your beloved Saviour? In whom I am well pleased. Dear friends, are you well pleased? I don't ask if you are pleased with what I have said in giving testimony to the truth of my text; but are you pleased with the Saviour as He emerges from the waters of baptism, and with the testimony of God?"

Born Again.

This is ultimate doctrine. It is essential Christianity. It is evidently a piece, not of human, but of divine philosophy, and it came down from above. The coin which bears the image and superscription of Cæsar is Cæsar's coin; and the thought which bears the image and superscription of God is God's thought. Christ alone offers to create man anew in the image of God. Every sinner so transformed is a demonstration that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The new birth is the substance of Christianity and the miracle of miracles. It is more than to open the eyes of a blind man, or to strengthen the feet of a lame man. "I am come that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly."

The new birth carries with it all that man needs. What goes with the new birth? All that belongs to the new life. When a volunteer is accepted and sworn in as a soldier in the regular army, what goes with his new position? All that belongs to the soldier's life—clothing, food, shelter, a place in the ranks, daily discipline, and everything that goes into a soldier's life. When a man believes in the Lord Jesus, and is born again, he gains all that belongs to the man in Christ. He has become a child of God, and comes into possession of all the rights and privileges that go with membership in God's household—the robe, the ring, the fatted calf, pardon for sin; peace with God, daily food and daily spiritual raiment, a place in the ranks, discipline, grace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.

A man never could become a soldier by stealing one after another the various pieces of a soldier's regimentals, tricking himself out in them, and strutting about alone in his borrowed finery. Habits do not make the man. A man can never become a Christian by imitating as well as he can Christian graces, and going about like a wolf in sheep's clothing, or a bird in borrowed plumage. We do not want the signs of the life; we want the life. Regeneration is a change taking place at the very fountain and centre of life. It means revolution delivery from the power of sin. The swearing man will cease to swear, the lying man will cease to lie, the unclean man will cease to be unclean. A soldier is immediately freed from civil responsibilities. He pays no taxes; he has no home; he leaves father, mother, wife, to be a soldier. The sinner is freed from the dominion of sin by becoming a Christian. There is no other freedom than that which comes by manumission.

The new birth brings back all that man has lost through sin. Men say "This is a material age. Railroads and grain-elevators we understand; but spirit—what is spirit? The new birth—what is the new birth? We have not so much as heard if there be a new birth." Such men are like travellers carrying a lantern after the light is put out. The spirit has gone out; prophecies, tongues, miracles, gifts of healing—all are gone. Like stupid boys we have lost them all. We are carrying an extinguished lantern, and call it Materialism. What have we left of the supernatural? Nothing but the rusty frame. Regeneration gone, prophecy gone, inspiration gone, hell gone, and heaven going. We have lost everything that God gave.

All come back with the new birth. The flame is lighted; the spirit is revived. God has come back to the world, and the spirit of man so inspired breathes forth every note of its very best music. Every bush is aflame, and every mountain glows. The world is thrilling with the Divine Presence, and the creature is a new creature. Old things have passed away, or rather, old things have become new, because charged with a new and heavenly meaning. Man born again is man at his best; man possessed once more of his ancient properties and restored to his first intimacy with supernal powers. The word means more than we know.

We may narrow and debase our words as we punch and clip our coins. We take only one meaning. Jesus used the words "born again" broadly, to include all that belongs to the Divine life. The fact is, there are many births, and the lowest and least is natural birth. Better that a man were never born, than that he were born and not born again, born many times. A tragedy in many acts. Transitions and transitions "from glory to glory."

We are now at the critical point. Every thing turns on the next question. "Ye must be born again," does some man say, with a little scornful emphasis upon the word "must"? "Can we work miracles? Are we Gods to kill and make alive? Do you say in the same breath, it is the work of the Spirit, and that we must be born again?" Yes, we say in the same breath, it is a miracle, that unaided man is unable to be born again of himself as he is to raise the

dead, and we instantly add: "Ye must be born again." "Moses, go down into the land of Egypt, and stand before King Pharaoh." "How shall I stand before King Pharaoh? Who am I, to do this great thing?" "Moses, cast that rod in thine hand to the ground; there, it is a serpent. Now take it by the tail; there, it is a rod again. Now go; I am going with you." It makes a great difference who goes with us. If God speaks when we speak, our speaking will amount to something. See how our Lord helped Nicodemus when he was puzzled and distressed. He said "I have been telling you heavenly things and you do not understand. We will go back to earthly things and begin all over again. Nicodemus, you know something about history. Do you remember in your nation's history anything about a serpent? Do you recall that scene in the wilderness? Now listen, I am going to tell you something. As Moses lifted up that serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Restoration was connected with the serpent. It was God's arrangement. Regeneration is connected with Christ by Divine appointment. No man is born again apart from Christ. We cannot explain the mystery but we affirm, the reality of the connection, "Whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

To every man it dealt the measure of faith. You cannot do anything? Nay, you can do everything. With faith all things are possible. Let God's declaration shut out our hasty mouths. "I am going with you." Then we are able to go. "You must be born again." You can be born again.—N. Y. Evangelist.

Silenced.

A dancing professor felt it his duty to win one of his many associates to Christ. "O, ———," said he, "I long to see you a Christian. Do come to Jesus, won't you?" "For what?" was the blunt rejoinder. "Why, for salvation. Don't you want to be saved?" "Yes, I do; but what particular sins do you want me to be saved from?" "Why, we are all sinners, you know." "Yes, I know; but I do not cheat, steal, lie, swear, nor use tobacco. What lack I yet?" "Do you pray?" "No, do you?" "Yes," said the Name-to-live, "I pray for you." "For me! when, I'd like to know?" "Monday night you were at the dance; Tuesday night I met you at the ball, and we didn't get home you know, until four o'clock in the morning; Wednesday night I saw you at the social, and like the rest of us you 'carried on like sixty'; Thursday night I don't know where you were, but if cards could testify, they would tell what you and I were up to, until two o'clock Friday night, and now it is Saturday, and for the life of me I can't tell what time you've had for prayer this week, or when you could have felt like it. Oh, I forget. Your church holds a prayer-meeting every Thursday evening, does it not?" "Yes." "And was that where you were last Thursday night?" "Yes, certainly." "Did you pray for me there?" "I tried to," was the faint response. "Well I don't want to hurt your feelings; but for conscience' sake don't do that again. If you pray for anybody pray for yourself. You claimed when you were converted to have had more happiness in one hour than you had had in your whole life before, and if that had been true, I should have been a Christian long before now; but as far as I can see, you seek your happiness just where I do,—in the world; and if it is right for you it can't be wrong for me." So saying, he departed, leaving his friend to ponder upon his ways, and wonder how effectual and fervent the prayers of one could be who was trying faithfully to serve God and mammon, or how much such prayers could avail in the salvation of lost souls.—Christian Secretary.

ANOTHER ILLUSION DISSIPATED.—The Valley of Death in the Island of Java, where "the deadly Upas tree" exerted its baneful influence over all the forms of life, turns out to be a huge imposture. The scientific curiosity of Dr. Otto Kuntze, the celebrated German explorer, impelled him to visit Pakamaran for himself, and to investigate its potent death-sleeping effects. His guides and servants would not countenance such temerity, and one of them tried to hold him back from certain death by sheer force. But he pushed on, and found, instead of a myriad skeletons of beasts, serpents, and birds, that such a thing as even a dead fly was not to be discovered, after a long and careful search, and that the valley was quite as healthy as any other part of the Island. Ignorance and superstition had created a fearful myth, which has now gone the way of many another haunted region, and many another priestly terror. Poisonous exhalations are common enough in all undrained tropical regions; but the birds are as safe from their effects in flying over the valley of the Upas-tree as over the most favoured spot of cultivated land the earth contains.