

Sunday Reading.

For the Christian Messenger.

Our Saviour sang.

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out. Sing, aged pilgrim, sing Along the weary road, Each toilsome step will surely bring The nearer to thy God. Then cheer thee on thy way With many a glad some song, And thus—rejoicing every day, Soon join in the tuneful throng. Sing Christian warrior, sing, While pressing back the foe, For hosts on high are witnessing The combat here below. Look up with steadfast eye, And thou shalt shortly sing O, Grave! where is thy victory? O, Death! where is thy sting? Sing, young believer, sing, Temptations still abound, And deeds of darkness flourishing O'er all the enchanted ground. Then let thy Saviour be Thy ever constant guide, Till thou shalt stand, from frailties free In safety at His side. J. S. Halifax, April 13, 1883.

The Silence of God.

REV. J. H. VINCENT, D. D.

Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord, my Rock; be not silent to me. The child craves a word from his father. The tone of the prayer suggests a delayed reply. It is a child's protest. The rest of the verse is burdened with solicitude: "Lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit."

There is something strange and unaccountable in the Divine silence. Because of it some men say, "There is no God;" others, "Why should He ever notice so small a speck in His universe as man?" Others, seeing wrong go unrebuked, declare that "God is indifferent to moral distinctions. He is a great force, physical and intellectual but cares not for right or wrong;" while others see in His silence His patience and serenity.

God is indeed patient and serene. He hides His way of working. He foresees the end from the beginning, and works out wondrous results, filling the hearts of men first with problems, and then with praise. Joseph dies, and a new king comes who ignores Joseph, the dynasty he controlled and the people he represented. Then come, in quick succession, oppression, Moses, murder, Midian, deliverance, a kingdom—then the Babe of Bethlehem. From the babe Moses to the babe Jesus was a period of fourteen and a half centuries. God saw the Child in the manger when he rocked the child to sleep in the ark of bulrushes. God was silent as to his purpose, but wrought it out. People murmured, but God was silent. Moses, God's servant, complained at the slowness and the hardness of the intervening life between Zoan and Zion—but God was silent. He needs no explanations or apologies.

To most men God is silent in nature. They do not hear his voice in the song of bird, the war of ocean, or the voice of the thunder. To most men he is silent in the depths of their own spirit. They were made in the image of God indeed, but that image now is like a fingered and spotted and marred daguerreotype. To most men God is silent even in His own word. It is to them an unstrung harp. They asked a thousand curious questions, and find no reply to them in the Book; and they say, "God is silent," or, "There is no God."

To multitudes of men who study nature by the aid of human science, God is silent even the depths and heights they explore. According to their thought, He shuts Himself up in the infinities, creates protoplasm and bioplasm, and leaves them to work themselves out in endless evolutions. Then, why not say that "God is dead?" When men take all love out of God's heart, and all special providences out of God's administration, and all particular thoughts of grace and goodwill out of His dealings with men, the next thing to do is to bury this huge shadow of a useless something in a great grave, and then level the grave down, and write over it in flowers that will fade with the frost: Nothingness.

Now, I want to say that God's silence is only man's deafness. God is not silent. He is not silent in nature. He is not silent in the soul of man. He made man to hear His own voice. Man may call it "superstition," but it is God's voice. He may call it "weakness" or "morbid conscience," but it is God's voice. He who calls God silent is himself deaf and deceived. God is not silent in his providential administration of human affairs. Out of the Babel of man's convictions and doubts and observations, we may hear words concerning "justice," "patience," "holiness," "duty," "invitation," "promise." God is not silent in His Word. There he speaks (and those who have ears can hear) concerning His own character and law; concerning sin and redemption; concerning pardon and purity and heaven. Nor is God silent to the obedient and listening soul. "He that doeth My will shall know of the doctrine." Love turns all the universe into a whispering gallery. Dead stone walls speak to a loving heart. How pure and sweet a thing is the pure love of the sexes for each other! To the lover nature is full of suggestions concerning his beloved; the light is brighter because of her; the fragrance of flowers is richer, the sunrise more glorious; all beautiful things are doubly beautiful because of the worthy heart that is the centre of his life. Thus, by a higher inspiration the world receives a new significance because of the soul's love for God, and the personal consciousness of God's love. These give tone, light, strength, depth, and force to His life. Flowers are sweeter because God made them. Every leaf is to him a sermon. God speaks to him perpetually; and above the din and roar and confusion of human life he hears the sweet assurance from his Father, "I love thee My child." He spells out words of love in the very stars of heaven, and in these new combinations forgets the odd mythological adjustments. His constellations are of cross and anchor, of robe and throne and crown, and he sees in the skies above him the face of his Beloved, and hearing Him speak, replies: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." God is never silent to the sincere, devout, patient, obedient and trustful heart.

Always New.

"How many years have I stood in this place," asked Mr. Spurgeon, "and preached to congregations just like this Sabbath after Sabbath, morning and evening? Now suppose I had preached on some scientific subject, I should have been spun out a long while ago. If I had any other doctrine to preach than Christ crucified, I should have scattered my congregations to the winds of heaven long ago."

But the gospel is always new. The name of Jesus, the music of his silver bell, rings out o'er hill and dale as when on the first Christmas night the angels sang glory to God in the highest. There is a matchless charm about it that never dies out, and never will while the world stands. The force which Christ wields is love. The only crime which could be laid to his charge was his immensity of love, or as the poet puts it "Found guilty of excess of love." There is a great attraction about Christ when we see the change he works in men. There is no true conversion except through the cross.

"What," asks Mr. Spurgeon, "made us a Protestant nation for so many years? I don't say we are one now. The stakes of Smithfield did it. Martyrdom burnt a place in the very heart of England for Christ to dwell in."

Jesus Christ is the great attractive magnet, and when he gets hold of any of us he turns us into magnets, and we turn somebody else, and they in like manner turn others, and more and more the kingdom grows. Christ is still the working power, but he works through those who have received him. If men are in Christ, it matters little how or when they were converted.—Christian World.

The Baptist church at Konigsberg Russia has been the object of special blessing during the past year. Towards the end this was specially the case. Its 800 members, or thereabouts, had taken themselves to prayer, and at Christmas gathering, which closed at the new year, more than 130 of those who attended those meetings profess to have found peace.

Sermon.

(Published by request.)

SERMON DELIVERED AT PORT MEDWAY, MARCH 25TH, BY REV. R. H. BISHOP.

"Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God.—1 SAM. VI. 20.

The Ark of God is in the hands of the Philistines. Away they bear it from Ebenezer in Israel to Ashdod in Philistia—away from the field of carnage of thirty thousand slain, to the house of Dagon, the great "fish god" of the Philistines where they place it over against the hideous idol, half man, half fish. Jehovah and Dagon face to face in a heathen temple. They lock the doors and retire for the night. Morning dawns, when lo! Dagon lies prostrate before the ark of God. Mysterious! but try again. Second morning dawns. Dagon has fallen, is headless, handless, ruined. "Only the stamp of Dagon was left to him." Nor is this all. The people begin also to fall. See! how are they smitten on every side, as if struck by an unseen hand, from the centre to the circumference of the city and even on down to the very waters of the "great sea." "The Lord's hand was heavy upon them." "And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, the ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us." "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" Carry it to Gath say the lords of the Philistines.

Away to Gath goes the ark, and lo! that city is smitten. Take it to Ekron they say. Away to Ekron goes the ark. The Ekronites tremble and cry. "They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people." The greatest problem of the day in Philistia, "what shall we do to the ark of the Lord?"

Better advice is now given by the hastily summoned priests and diviners, and at once acted upon. Two mitch kine unaccustomed to the yoke are fastened to a new cart upon which is set the ark with certain trespass offerings of gold in a coffer beside it, and all is now left in the hands of the God of that ark; "for see" say they "if it goeth up by the way of his own coasts to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done this great evil: but if not then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it is a chance that happened to us." Heaven consented to the plan. Away go the kine on the straight road to Beth-shemesh, a city of Judah, "lowing as they go" for their calves they are leaving behind, but turning "not aside to the right hand or to the left."

What a day for Beth-shemesh. They "rejoiced to see" the ark. It is wheat harvest time. The cart stops in the field of Joshua beside "a great stone." The divine hint is taken. "And they clave the wood of the cart and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the Lord." So far all has gone well.

But now an over-curious "somebody" steps up to the ark and lifts the mercy seat, which formed the lid of the ark, and looks in. Not much there, only a "pot of manna," "Aaron's rod that budded," and the "tables of stone." Evil example is sure to be followed. Another, and another, and another looks into the awful emblem of the Jewish religion, which should have been covered from the profane gaze in toto,—hundreds, thousands, of the gathering throngs have now looked. Jehovah is insulted, and in judgment his arm is outstretched. Fifty thousand, three score and ten lie dead about that ark. As the living looked upon the dead they trembled and cried, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God!"

Dear hearers, without waiting longer, I want to say to-day—

I. Before that same holy Lord God, it is the decree of heaven, that we all must stand. Is it not written, "He hath appointed a day in which he shall judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained?" And again, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ?" and again, "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after death the judgment?" Think of it, you whose locks are silvering. Think of it, you who are to-day so active in this busy world's affairs. Think of it, young men—I am one of your number—"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Boys and girls, mark my words. Before that impar-

tial bar will be seen multitudes no taller than you. There to receive sentence "according to the deeds done in the body." "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." "All nations," you see before "this holy Lord God." Compare Rev. xx. 11-12: "And I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." This great earth and the greater heavens rolling away into oblivion, perhaps into annihilation! All humanity, "small and great," detained for judgment, for weal or woe, "according to their work," especially their treatment of the Second and Third Persons in the ever-glorious Trinity. The words of the great Preacher come to mind. "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes, but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

In various respects men differ from each other in this world. We see endless diversity in the midst of nature's uniformity, but in two respects the experiences of all will agree—all must die and all must stand before Israel's holy Lord God in the last great day. Ah! who can stand?

II. I might add in the second place. He who cannot stand, must fall.

Fifty thousand in one day! Fifty thousand corpses strewn about the ark in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite, and what for? A sinful "look." What an illustration of the Divine character! Of God's hatred of "little sins." It was not for a transgression which appeared great in men's eyes. It was only for a sinful "look" that those fifty thousands fell. "And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and three score and ten men: and the people lamented because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter."

An evil casting of the eyes! What a "little sin!" Could there be a smaller? Yet we are distinctly informed, it was for that sin they died. Ah! how the Lord must hate sin—all sin. How like great mountains must the smallest sins appear unto him. One taste each of the forbidden fruit in Eden and a whole world is deluged with woe. One touch of the ark, just to steady it on the cart, and Uzza is a dead man. One lie and Ananias falls at the Apostle's feet. One glance a piece and fifty thousand pay the penalty with their lives.

Oh! how holy must that character be which cannot abide the presence of the smallest sin. Behold! He cannot "look upon sin with the least degree of allowance." How pertinent then the exclamation of our text, "Who can stand before this holy Lord God!" Yet stand or fall we must. Mark another fact, dear hearers. There was "a great slaughter." A whole army fell that day. "A great slaughter," but no complaint. I am struck with that thought. Plenty of lamentation and weeping, but no murmuring. Nobody exclaimed, what an awful punishment for a little sin. Nobody murmured this is unjust in the Most High—such severity is ill suited to his character of "Our Father who art in heaven." Nobody indignantly cried, God has in this thing made "a mountain out of a mole-hill."

No, no. All took it as God meant it, as an expression of his intense abhorrence of all and of every sin. Oh that we understood the Divine character, that we might know what sin is, and what penalty it deserves. Alas! how little is known of Him. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." I doubt not, if we could but see God as heaven sees him we too would instantly fall upon our faces, crying "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."

O hearer, when you go home, take your dust-covered Bible down from that shelf; or bring it up from under those "daily papers," or "works of fiction," take it, and turn to 1 Sam. vi. 20, and fasten your eyes on our text a

moment, than ask yourself in all honesty this question, If death should this instant summon my soul into eternity, what would my prospects be? Could I stand before this Holy Lord God, "in whose sight even the very heavens are unclean? Or should I have to fall? Oh! the publican's prayer is upon our every lip, "God be merciful to me a sinner." It is there, or it ought to be.

III. This brings us to our last point—Is there any chance for any of us? "Who can stand, &c." Bless God there is a chance—allow the expression—there is a chance, for have we not read of "the general assembly and church of the first born whose names are written in heaven . . . and of the spirits of just men made perfect." Have our eyes not looked upon the words "after this I beheld and lo, a great multitude which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands."

"Part of the host have crossed the flood, And part are crossing now."

"Elijah" was a man of "like passions with ourselves." O yes, there is a way to holiness and heaven—there is a "chance" for you, and there is a "chance" for me.

What is it? If I were holy now and had never sinned in the past in word, or thought, or deed, I could stand before God in the garb of my own righteousness. Said the angel to Daniel, "I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God." If I were angelic I could stand as the angels do in the garb of self-righteousness. But alas! there is not the smallest "chance" for me on that ground.

"I know I am weak and sinful." "The mistakes of my life have been many." "The sins of my heart have been more."

And hark! The trumpet of the word! "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

We must look about us for a better way than by the deeds of the law; for "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." "In his sight," mark those words; for all depends upon how God looks at us. Our only chance lies in the discovery of some way in which we, though sinful, may appear well "in his sight." The problem of all the ages has been, "How can God be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly?" The answer would be a gospel "good news" for sinners who feel themselves to be "doomed and almost damned." Bless God, the problem is solved and the solution is expressed in a single word, "Substitution." God help us to make that very plain to-day. We fear somebody may die who might have lived—somebody may fall who might have stood before Israel's holy Lord God.

You were singing, "God's holy law transgressed Speaks nothing but despair."

Very true. But suppose one competent in every way, by the will and decree of God should take the sinner's place and honor and keep the law for him, to the entire satisfaction of all heaven. Plainly then that dreaded law could have no power on the sinner for whom the substitute had been thus found. Now this is just what has been done. Jesus "fulfilled the law and made it honorable." So one great step is gained.

"Free from the law, O happy condition! Jesus hath bled and there is remission. Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall, Christ hath redeemed us once for all."

"But how is the work of Christ to be made available to me," you ask. By simple faith, dear anxious enquirer: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." In your heart of hearts you must apprehend and agree to God's plan; for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

"But I want more than mere external, legal righteousness: my nature must be renovated; my dead soul revived. Without these I cannot meet my Judge. Very true. Everybody should know that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." We must be regenerated and sanctified. "There shall in no wise enter into it

any thing that defileth." But, what says the Word, "To them that believe . . . gave he power to become the sons of God." By Christ "redeemed" in Christ "a new creation," my friend, "old things have passed away, all hath become new." What more do we need? Our substitute is at once our "ransom," our complement of present righteousness, our "pattern" of holiness, our "surety" at the right hand of God, our final "judge," our "all in all."

With an ever living, ever loving, Almighty Saviour offered to us in the gospel, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, whose pure unselfish life lights up the way to our "higher life," whose ignominious death satisfied infinite justice and conquered the powers of darkness, whose presence in heaven is one continual intercession for us who trust in him, and whose coming to "judge the world in righteousness" will be to meet all believers as a Friend, yea, rather as an elder Brother,—with such a Saviour, I say, offered freely to us in the gospel, instead of spending our time in sighing and groaning we ought all to be singing with Wesley,

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want, More than all in thee I find."

Oh, trust in Christ. Lie passive in the Saviour's hands. Happy is that believer who is in God's hands "as clay in hands of the potter." As to obedience let it all be the outflow of love; "If ye love me keep my commandments." Oh! the provision is complete; the plan is perfect; the way is open, and there is light quite sufficient for one step at a time. Who will accept this "great salvation?" He shall stand in great peace before Israel's "holy Lord God."

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

From India.

IN TENT, NEAR CUMBUM, March 12, 1883.

MY NEW STATION.

The great Ongole mission field, which extends over a wide range of country, and embraces a large number of Christians (nearly 20,000), is being sub-divided, with a view to more frequent visitation of all its parts, and more thorough supervision; for without this, much that has been gained by the great ingatherings will be lost. It had grown altogether too large to be efficiently worked from one station only (Ongole). Consequently nearly three years ago we began to agitate for a division of it; and with the hearty concurrence of my brethren I chose the Western portion, with head quarters at or near Cumbum, and was accordingly appointed to this place to open a new station. Subsequently when Mr. Williams left the Ramapatam Seminary for a visit to America, I was called to take charge of that Institution in his absence. In December last he returned, and I was released from that engagement, and the way was at length opened for me to return and take up my previous appointment. Three other sub divisions of the Ongole mission field have been set off and are about to be formed into new stations and occupied by missionaries at once.

The town of Cumbum is about 67 miles west of Ongole, or 77 from the sea coast, as Ongole is 10 miles inland. Having found a room in one of the Ongole mission houses in which to locate my family temporarily, I set out alone from Ongole, Feb. 8th. The journey is made by ox cart, and a tent is taken along, to serve as a house; all furniture, provisions, cooking utensils, &c., that will be needed during the journey, must also be taken. We make about 16 miles each night, and keep under cover in camp during the day, for though it is February, the thermometer is up in the region of 90, every day, and falls only to about 70 during the coldest part of the night. Such is winter here.

Cumbum lies in a valley between two mountain ranges, that on the west being the Nulla Mulla Hills, an irregular chain, some 3,000 feet high, while that on the east resembles the North Mountain in Cornwallis and Annapolis very much, though it is somewhat higher. It is about eight miles distant the place which I have selected for the mission premises, and being so familiar in appearance, the view is very pleasing. My Mission field is about twenty miles wide, between these two ranges of hills, and about fifty miles long, a slice off the western side of the Ongole field. It contains hundreds of towns and villages, in fifty or sixty of which there are Christians. In six of these places the number of Christians is so large that separate, independent churches