LABLE
SPONIBLE

TIGHT BINDING
RELIURE TROP RIGIDE

The Christian Watchman

G. W. DAY, Printer, BY PURENESS, BY KNOWLEDGE—BY LOVE UNFEIGNED."—St. Paul. REV. E. B. DeMILL, A. M., Editor

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NUMBER II.

JESUS' DISCOURSE WITH NICODEMUS.

John III. 1—13.

During the visit of Jesus to Jerusalem on the week of the Passover he had performed many wonderful works. He had proclaimed himself to be the Son of God. He had purified his Father's house in the presence of many witnesses. He had also wrought many miracles in attestation of his claims.

The report of these transactions had of course been spread throughout Jerusalem. The Scribes and Pharisees doubtless heard of his purification of the temple with jealous feelings, yet as he had rectified an acknowledged abuse, no public notice could be taken of his conduct. Among the members of the Sanuedrim there were a few who were not prejudiced against Jesus by the reports in circulation.

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimthea seem to have been friends. They were not naturally of energetic dispositions, and both, especially Nicodemus, seem to have been deficient in decision of character. They did not wish to commit themselves to any decided course of conduct; so it would seem they agreed between themselves that one of them should search out Jesus, to discover if possible the design of his conduct, and the character of his teachings.

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. He chose this season, because he could then converse with Jesus, without danger of interruption, and because his coming at such a time would not expose him to contempt or danger from his companions in office.

His thoughts had been directed towards the kingdom, which the prophecies of the Old Testament and the preaching of John the Baptist had led him to believe was now at hand. He believed that this kingdom was to be external that by it the Jews would regain their long lost liberties, and gratify their long cherished revenge. He felt certain that he himself would obtain all the benefits of the new reign. He was of the seed of Abraham. He was free from the sins which John had condemned. He was a Pharisee and a sincere observer of the requirements of his sect. Yet while he felt secure of the benefits of the heavenly kingdom, he wished to obtain more exact information respecting its character, the nature of its blessings, and perhaps of the exact time of its establishment.

With such ideas he came to Christ. He believed that no man without divine aid could restore the sick and raise the dead. He viewed a miracle as a credential given by the most High to him who wrought it, a seal from the divinity attesting the truth of his claims and teachings. He naturally concluded that Christ was a teacher sent from God. He opens his address "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher sent from God, for no man can show such signs as thou showest, without the direct assistance of God."

Christ at once perceived the state of mind and heart of Nicodemus, the false notions which he entertained respecting the kingdom of heaven, the complacency which he felt in view of his own righteousness, the unworthy end for which he had sought this interview. He knew that Nicodemus desired not holiness, but knowledge respecting the future condition of the Jewish people. He takes no notice of the terms of address, but at once proceeds to correct false impressions by a remark which though at first unintelligible would lead to further inquiry and explanation.

"You think that you are entitled to admission into the kingdom of heaven. You imagine that because you are a descendant of Abraham, a Pharisee, a teacher of the law, your title to the inheritance is trebly secure. You are mistaken, for unless a man be born again he cannot participate in that kingdom which God is about to establish."

Had Christ been speaking of the Gentiles, and the terms of their admission to the privileges of the new dispensation, Nicodemus would have thought that he clearly perceived his meaning. This word was used to denote the change from Paganism to Judaism. But this could not be the new birth to which Jesus alluded, for he had included all—Jews as well as Gentiles—all must be born again. It must then refer to natural generation. "How" he asks with astonishment "can a man, after he has arrived at years of maturity be literally and truly born anew."

Christ at once corrects this absurd idea. He repeats his former remarks. He shows the author of this change and its necessity. "You know" he says, "what Baptism in water expresses. You also know that the spirit of God often operates on the hearts of men. Unless man undergoes a complete change of heart, illustrated by water purification, and effected by the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Unless a man is born of water and of the spirit, he cannot participate in the blessings of the new dispensation. Man in his natural state is not prepared for this kingdom; he by nature is unholy, he cannot perceive a spiritual government, nor is he prepared for its advantages. Nor can he by any effort of will prepare himself for entrance into this new state. The will is a slave to a corrupt heart. A sinful nature can beget only sinful thoughts, desires, and actions. Whatsoever is of the flesh is flesh born."

"On the other hand, the Spirit of God can prepare the heart for the enjoyments of the new kingdom. When this operates it transforms the heart entirely—and where it operates, the new birth must ensue—a change must take place—the eye of the soul can perceive spiritual things. —Whatsoever is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Nicodemus now understands our Saviour to teach, that the kingdom of heaven as a spiritual kingdom, that as man must experience a natural birth, to dwell in this natural state, so he must experience another birth before he can dwell in the new state—and, moreover, that this new birth is effected by the Holy Spirit. Yet those ideas are so contrary to all his preconceived opinions that he cannot give them credence.

Jesus now proceeds to an explanation—He shows by an image somewhat of the Spirit's freedom—independence of man, and mode of operation. "The wind bloweth where it listeth—it is free—independent of man. It exhibits phenonema—we hear the sound of it, and notice its effects. Yet we cannot follow it to its origin, or trace it to the end of its course."

"So with the Spirit. It is free from control, it is independent, it moves where it pleases. We cannot trace its progress—we cannot mount up to its source, nor follow its entere course. We cannot even trace its first operations in the heart —or discover all the changes wrought by it. Yet though thus mysterious in its operation, we know that it works, for we can witness its phenomena. The holy life—the transformation in mind and heart."

Nichodemus is still incredulous—He understood Christ to teach that the new birth is the creation of the free Spirit of God, which works silently, mysteriously, yet effectually. Still he cannot bring himself to believe doctrines so new and strange. He asks incredulously. "How can these things be."

Jesus answers, my doctrines respecting the necessity and cause of regeneration, and the operation of the Holy Spirit should not meet with such incredulity from you. You are a teacher of Israel—you profess to understand the scriptures, and others look on you as a great teacher. Now, have you never learnt from the law and the prophets that the kingdom of heaven is spiritual, and its subjects holy? Have you never learnt that man by nature is sinful, unfit for the new kingdom, and unable to fit himself for it. Have you not yet learnt that the Spirit alone can perform this great change? As a teacher of the law you should not be so incredulous respecting these doctrines. Again, you acknowledge that I am a teacher come from God, because I have wrought miracles. If so all my teachings should be received on that ground. I solemnly affirm that the doctrine which I have taught is true. I tell you truths which I have not received through the reports of men, nor through the ordinary means of acquiring knowledge. Yet while I as a teacher sent from God (as you acknowledge) proclaim what I know to be true, you do not believe.

There are other and higher truths which I might reveal, but if I tell you of things which transpire on earth and you believe not, what hope have I that you will believe the transactions of heaven. The kingdom of which I have spoken, is established on earth—the subjects of it are mortals, the spirit works in them on earth. These things seem impossible to you. Can you believe the higher truths, on which these depend. Could you believe if I were to reveal the cause of the spirit's working—the purposes of the eternal mind, or the results of those divine purposes.

Yet even such revelations as these you should receive from me, you say that I am a teacher sent from God. Is it not reasonable therefore to suppose that I should teach some new truths, some truths which the human mind could not discover.

Man can learn and teach what transpires before his eyes but he can not know what transpires in heaven for he was never there. But the Son of Man who descended from heaven, who though on earth still is in heaven.—He can know, and teach heavenly things. He can know the Divine will, the Divine plan, the Divine conduct. If He should reveal them they ought to be believed.

A. B. C.

For the Christian Watchman.

Glory of God declared by the Heavens.

In contemplating the heavens, owing to the vast space which separates us from the heavenly bodies, but few proofs of the existence of a great first cause are furnished. The planets, however, whose proximity enables us to discover their form and motions, present the most striking marks of design, and witness so clearly of the Great God, that none but a madman can reject their testimony. Then those myriads of shining spheres utter forth the power, glory, and majesty of their Great Creator. Then the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy works.

We look upon our solar system and find therein such an arrangement as will best conduce to the safety of the planets and the comfort of their inhabitants.

For instance, the earth is filled with living creatures whose existence depends upon its situation with relation to other parts of the solar system. The sun is placed in the centre of the system. There is no reason, upon the supposition of chance, why a vast luminous body should exist at all, or why it might not occupy the situation of Saturn or Neptune. In such a case, the present inhabitants of this globe could never have existed. The fact that there are creatures on this globe, and that there is a central body which dispenses the light and heat necessary to their existence, shows an adaptation, and consequently a designer.

Again. Even if the sun were in the centre of the system, the earth could not be filled with its present inhabitants unless it rotated on its axis. If it were stationary, or revolved around the sun without rotating, one-half of its surface would be a burning desert, the other a region of perpetual ice. If it revolved on its axis less frequently than it does, each day would be a burning summer, each night a frozen winter.

The seasons, from which the soil derives its repose and nourishment, without which the earth would be a vast waste, are produced by its revolutions around the sun.

All these prove a powerful, wise, and benevolent designer. In this connection other marks of design might be adduced, but space will not permit.

If we contemplate the solar system, we find a vast mass of luminous heated matter surrounded by planets, some of which have satellites revolving around them. These planets are quite small when compared with the great central body, and their revolutions around it are in orbits more or less inclined to each other, and with greater or less eccentricity. Now, it has been demonstrated that these conditions are essential to the permanence of such a system. Here then is an exhibition of design. If there be no God, how came the immense sun at once luminous and heated, to be in the centre of the system? Why are the planetary orbits inclined and not in planes? Why are they eccentric and not circular, or why are they not more eccentric? Why? Because there is a God.

It was necessary that these planets should be in motion, and accordingly they are in motion. Now, suppose matter eternal, could it form itself into a spherical shape, and then start itself around the sun with such regularity that astronomers can tell its situation in almost any period of past time, and foretell where it will be at any given moment in the future?

Planets must revolve on their axes, or else life could not be sustained, nor could their revolutions around the sun proceed harmoniously. We have already seen that some hand must have projected the newly-formed planet into space, but moreover, it was necessary that this force must not be in the line of the centre of gravity, else it would not rotate, nor in direct opposition to this line, else its motion would be irregular. Had the projectile force been directed against any other point than that against which it was directed, the globe would have been uninhabitable and perhaps a disturbance to every planet within the influence of its attraction.

A globe, in order to rotate regularly about one axis, must revolve in a particular diameter. A perfect sphere has no axis of permanent rotation, consequently would constantly shift its poles under the influence of surrounding attractions. In an oblate spheroid there are two diameters, the longest and the shortest. These, and these alone, would be permanent axes. Now, we find the earth to be an oblate spheroid with its shortest diameter for the axis of rotation. Thus, out of an infinite number of forms, we find that chosen which is best fitted for regular motion, and out of an infinite number of axes that is selected which alone ensures perfect regularity and permanence.

Owing to the spheroidal figure of the globe, a greater mass of matter is accumulated around the equator than in the vicinity of the poles. The attraction of the sun upon this matter causes what is called the precession of the equinoxes. Thus, what at first seems to insure the safety of the globe now seems to insure its destruction. What now prevents this body from falling into the ecliptic and creating irremedible disorder in the planetary system? We previously stated that the rotation of the globe on its axis was necessary to the existance of its inhabitants, still more, it is necessary to the existence of the globe itself, for it corrects the precession of the equinoxes, and thus suffers it to revolve in an orbit inclined to the plane of the ecliptic—a circumstance which, as we have previously mentioned, has been demonstrated to be essential to the safety and permanency of a system like this. Is not here a plain adaptation of means to an end?

Again. It is clear that the planets must revolve around the sun or obey the original impulse imparted to them, and fly off into space or else fall into the sun under the influence of its attractions. But what a nice adaptation is necessary to keep these globes free from mutual attractions, free from the countless disturbing forces to which they are exposed, and to cause them to revolve so regularly and harmoniously around the great centre.

We watch the planets in their circuits and find that they do not revolve in perfect circles. We now enquire, what hinders the planet when furthest from the sun from flying off beyond his influence? and again, when nearest the central body what hinders it from breaking from its course and falling to the surface of the sun.

Let us examine. The revolution of the planets around the sun is produced by its attraction together with the original force of projection. The sun's attraction has been found to be in inverse proportion to the square of the distance. The projectile force is in inverse proportion to the cube of the distance. Suppose a planet to revolve around the centre of the system in an eccentric orbit. As it approaches the sun in its course, the centrifugal power being in inverse proportion to the cube of the distance loses, while the centripetal power gains. Hence the motion of the body increases in rapidity. The momentus thus acquired prevents it from falling into the sun and carries it on in its course. As it recedes from the sun the centrifugal power gains on the centripetal, until it arrives at the part of its orbit farthest removed from the sun, where its velocity is at minimum.

Where attraction is less the plannet would rush forth into space; where the centrifugal force less, it would fall in the sun.

Could inanimate matter have formed this proportion between these two powers? could forces create themselves and adapt themselves to a body, so as to keep it forever in an even course, with such an inclination to the orbits of other planets, with such an eccentricity, that all harmonize with each other and move on without the danger and scarcely the possibility of an irregularity.

Finally, there is evidence of design in the direction in which the planets were originally projected. Had they been sent off from the sun in a perpendicular direction, they must have rushed lawlessly into space, or having exhausted the projecting force have returned back to the sun.

But one direction and one velocity originally given, is consistent with the permanence of the system, and this direction and velocity is exhibited. What can more plainly evidence a designer?

Here we have masses of inanimate matter in motion, rotating on permanent axes when chance was as infinity to one against such axes being produced. The protuberance in the vicinity of the equator upon which permanent rotation depends, leads to an irregularity which is in great part, corrected by rotation itself. We find satellites revolving around planets, and planets around a central body, with the most perfect regularity. We have a force of attraction and a force of projection in such proportions as to produce that form of orbit upon which the stability of the system depends; while from an infinite number of velocities and directions of projection, planets have those given them which will produce a revolution around the sun.

The exhibition of any one of these phenomena would produce conviction in any reasonable mind.

"The undevout astronomer is mad."

MATHETES.

For the Christian Watchman.

HEBREW POETRY.

NO. I.

SOURCES OF NATIONAL POETRY.

National song is a power universally recognized and felt. It is the outburst of strong and deep feeling, whatever may be its nature. Out of the countless songs which are written in every age, but few are preserved. Those which do not express a people's feelings, or which, expressing them, do not utter them in fitting language, are cast away; while those which express their feelings in worthy language, are accepted and preserved. A great song is therefore the voice of the nation when it speaks as one man its truest and deepest feelings, and as such ever arouses the heart of the listener—creating an effect corresponding with its cause. Nor does its influence end with the occasion which has drawn it forth. A great song lives as long as the nation, to remind it of the past, to animate it for the future, and to stir up the national heart as long as patriotism remains.

These great songs which thus live are the land marks of a people's progress, the lights which glitter far back along the path which has been traversed, the history, not of Kings and Parliament, but of the People; from whom Kings and Parliaments draw their only authority, and for whom alone they rule. By means of these we can best tell what they have done and suffered.

No history can tell us of that deep rooted love for home, that intense yearning after its peaceful joys which is inborn in the heart of all the Anglo Saxon race as do the songs of Home Sweet Home—or Auld Lang Syne. No story can tell us how fervent was the protest of loyalty against the disloyalty or rebellion of a certain age in English History as does the thrilling anthem "God save the King." No description, however, vivid, can tell us with what implacable vengeance a down trodden people rose up from ages of oppression, to hurl back upon these tyrants all their accumulated wrongs, like the hoarse chorus of the "Marsellaise."

Every nation has songs which show what have been its most powerful and most sacred thoughts, and which like those that have been mentioned,

"Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime!"

He was therefore a profound thinker who uttered that memorable (though dreadfully hacknied expression) "Give me the making of a nation's ballads and I care not who makes its laws."

The immediate causes of these songs are numberless, but there are a few general causes which seem necessary in every case, the existence of which is always shown by the songs of every nation.

In the first place a noble origin is imperative. The birth of the nation must be one of dignity, or else, the mists of time must shroud it from view and give it the imposing veil of secrecy. For the Lyric muse is too stately to endure obscurity. When she favors a nation, rather than accept the disgrace of a lowly origin, she will cover it with the resplendent robes of fable and mythology. No one sits down at her feast without the wedding garment.

The nation must have had a career, a past—whether long or short—upon which she can look back with pride. There must be a past on which great deeds have been done and mighty men have striven, and heroes stalked across the stage, or if this be absent, there must be a past of suffering, in which the tyrant prevailed, where the scene was dark and the low voice of wailing could alone be heard. Better still if there be great suffering, and great action combined—when the people had been crushed by oppression, and where their own heroic deeds had delivered them:

"To be weak is miserable
Doing or suffering."

An indolent, careless nation, whose few wants are easily supplied, who have lived for ages in ease and sloth—cannot have a single national song. To obtain this—a nation must be mighty in action, and mighty in suffering. She must endure the cross, if she would wear the crown.

A people must have strong pride and patriotism. That self-conceit which is contemptible in an individual is noble in a people. Here it is necessary that a nation look upon herself as greater than others more heroic, more favored of heaven—more free, more beautiful or happy—in some worthy way superior to her neighbours. In regarding her past acts and present state there must be an intensity of pride and love which no circumstances can destroy. This consciousness of superiority is the source of a spirit which disdains anything like submission.

Nor must the necessity of religious feeling be overlooked. Whatever the religion be, whether spiritual or material, it must be strongly associated with the national life. It must by turns excite, rebuke, restrain, threaten, and terrify. It must give the consciousness of supernatural agency. By this feeling man looks up and beholds his nation connected by invisible ties with Heaven in unity with the Celestial world and thus invincible.

The working of these causes may be illustrated by any nation, but especially by the Greeks, the supreme people in all that relates to the intellect.

We find the origin of the Greeks as a whole or in parts, when known, possessed of dignity and when unknown clothed in impressive mythology.

That their performances were of the highest order is proved by the fact that their deeds are as familiar to us now as our own, and the names of their heroes are household words. Great men came out of every Greek town in every generation. In that memorable ten year's agony around the walls of Troy they performed deeds that will be remembered while the world exists, in the marvellous Homeric lays.

We find great suffering among them. In listening to those very songs of theirs which have been shown to be the history of a nations feelings we find the Lyric muse constantly turning away from gods, or festivals, or heroes:—

"with mournful voice and low
To sing of the great old houses
And fights fought long ago!"

of national tragedies, terrific crimes, avenging Nemesis, and fearful retributions.

Theirs too, was that lofty pride which regarded other nations as Barbarians, and would not yield even to

"Innumerable hosts of foemen armed,"

a pride, which, when in later years, force of arms had failed, enabled Greece to avenge itself upon her conquerors by the boast of superior intellect.

The Greek religion was one which possessed considerable power, for though false, it was interweaved with every social and national institution. With its household gods to preside over homes, its sylvan deities to inhabit the woods and streams, its great gods of war, commerce, and agriculture: of hell, ocean, and heaven, its avenging furies, and inexorable fates, and Great Olympian Jove supreme over all, it possessed a potent influence over its believers. Connected with it were their oracles and prophecies, which even in the midst of prosperity would cause the nation to gain the hope of future greatness, and thus constituted no slight cause of excitement and poetic feeling.

With the view of this before us we cannot wonder at the magnificent achievements of the Greeks in every branch of Poetry. Possessed of every thing which could fill the soul with poetic fire they used well their high advantages and sang songs which have been the admiration of the world. Hence the old masters of Grecian Song swept the lyre with such power and to so many measures that their strains re-echoed in the heart as long as the nation existed.

And now, if, coming nearer to the point in view, we look at the life and literature of the Hebrew people, we find all these causes existing in the richest profusion. An origin so noble that it needs not to be covered with the veil of fable; gigantic wrongs endured, sublime deliverances effected; great sufferings, great actions, great heroes—the stage crowded with wonderful beings, the scene alive with countless miracles, and, behind all, the dim outline of the Almighty disposing all things and governing all. If therefore we have found the history of Greece to have been a great one, we shall find that of the Hebrews greater still; if among them we have found all the causes of poetry abounding, here we shall find them still more abundant. Compare them at any stage in their respective histories and we shall see the superiority everywhere manifested.

J.

Father Passaglia on the Roman Question

I send herewith a copious analysis of Father Passaglia's recent work on the Roman Question: "Who does not see (Father Passaglia observes) that the Italian people are hastening to that unhappy situation in which there is imminent danger, not trifling, but very serious danger; that a vast number of Italians, either by open and corporeal, or by secret and spiritual separation, become removed from the paradise of the Church, and leave the Church itself deprived of its most chosen sons? Already a great part of the clergy are in open discord with the majority of the laity: already almost all the shepherds are separated from their flocks, whilst the shepherd of the shepherds, the successor of Peter, the venerable Vicar of Christ on earth, hurls against the kingdom of Italy, and against Italian society, the dread thunderbolt of its censures. One might be tempted to believe that of the double power to bind and to loose, our bishops now retain the first alone, such concord do they exhibit in condemning, repelling, execrating whatever the whole nation desires and is striving to obtain. Wherefore this spectacle? Are the Italians renouncing the doctrines of our orthodox faith? No: on the contrary, they all revere that faith, and observe its rights in the most minute particulars. Are they assailing the rights of their legally constituted bishops in all that relates to sacred and religious matters? On the contrary, they all agree in professing for those rights the reverence which is their due. Do they despise the supreme and spiritual authority of the Pontiff? Far from it. Do they attack that freedom which was secured to the Church by the precious blood of Christ? On the contrary by proclaiming the principle of a 'free church in a free state,' they seek out every possible means of settling these difficult questions; even though repelled in the attempt they return a second and a third time to the search for peace, and they protest by all the means in their power that they will preserve the Catholic faith.

"In the opening part of his treatise Passaglia reminds the Bishops of the divine duties to which their mission is limited; and he then goes on to prove, with a clearness, with a force of argument, with an array of patristic authorities, absolutely leaving no hope of reply, that the Roman Catholic Bishops, by their addresses, by their pastoral letters to the clergy and their flocks respecting the temporal authority of the Popes, have betrayed their duty, and have furnished the world an occasion of gross scandal. The preaching of the Gospel, the teaching of Christian morality, the inculcation and example of Christian love, these constitute the legitimate tasks of Bishops, ministers of God; whatever goes beyond these is wrong. But to stir up by the deeds which we all deplore, especially during the last three years, war amongst Christians, to create deplorable and atrocious dissensions, to furnish the occasion of a religious schism which the Church must weep over to the end of time—this is a truly deplorable course of action, and one that can never be sufficiently condemned. It is an act for which God, at his day of judgment, will assuredly summon the perpetrators to render a terrible account.—In truth, the Church consists only of the clergy and their flocks. If the clergy remain isolated, if it drive away the flocks, and if the latter finally leave the clergy because they find themselves treated as enemies, where is the Church? Does it not altogether disappear? The unity of the Church is not possible without mutual concord.

"Passaglia accordingly concludes that the authority of the Roman Catholic Bishops on subjects unconnected with moral and theological doctrine possesses no importance whatever; that the chief end of that authority by divine institution, is to preserve the unity of separate churches in the Catholic Church, and to combat schisms and heresies.

"But the Catholic Bishops, adds Passaglia display hostility to the kingdom of Italy for two reasons—for the alleged injustice by which lawful sovereigns have been stripped of their dominions, for the alleged impiety by which the Roman Pontiff has been deprived of his temporal sovereignty Passaglia hereupon asks, who has given to the Bishops the authority to erect themselves into the judges of the peoples and of the princes of the earth? Their authority was not conferred for earthly, but for heavenly purposes. And resting on the authority of St. Bernard, so frequently quoted in this controversy, he observes: 'I have read that the Apostles were brought up to be judged, but I have never read that they assumed the character of judges.

"But," says Passaglia, "the Pontiff has pronounced his famous *non possumus*, and the bishops only follow the example of the Pope. A futile argument. The Papal declarations to which the *non possumus* refers do not touch the dogmas are not derived from holy writings or from the traditions of the Church. They are not obligatory, therefore; they are liable to change, therefore; one must, consequently, hope that, with the view of averting the immense calamities by which religion is menaced, the Pontiff will see the danger of confounding obstinacy with firmness, and will return to better counsels, and that to obtain this result the prayers of the bishops will be united to remind the common father of the course which his holy predecessors followed, and which the exigencies of religion now require."