

Messenger and Visitor

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British Civilization.

That the civic ruler is a minister of God is the teaching of Scripture, and that prayers should be made for those who are appointed to this ministry is an apostolic injunction. The prayers we offer for rulers may well be earnest and continuous. For the permanency of Christian civilization is of the greatest consequence to mankind. Stable and righteous civil government has been ever in the past a most important condition of the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ, and will doubtless continue to be so in the future. That our own nation has been called of God to so eminent service in the cause of Christian evangelization is for us a matter to inspire profound thankfulness and gladness. Under the favor of God she has obtained a large place in world's life, and should be in our hearts as was Jerusalem in the Hebrew poet's. There are indeed prophecies of evil uttered against Britain and many who share the spirit of the envious nations round about her would doubtless rejoice in the fulfilment of those pessimistic predictions. If one look only at the things that are seen, one might indeed feel alarm for the future. But if the signs of the times seem portentous of evil for England, and for all that she stands for in the interests of Christian civilization, let us not forget that it is not the first time that disaster has threatened. He who delivered her of old from all the expectation of her enemies and made her great and strong to fulfil the ministry to which He has called her, will still deliver and make strong. Only let the people remember who is their God and serve Him with faithful hearts. We do not therefore share the pessimism of the following statement from a writer in a recent issue of the Forum, but what he says of the connection of England with the best elements of the world's life is well worth pondering:

"The close of Victoria's reign will find her in a position of great difficulty and with a very gloomy outlook for the future. Isolated and alienated from the rest of the world, and unable to cope with its combined opposition, she bids fair to be stripped of many of her possessions, and like Spain, once the mistress of so many lands, to sink into the position of a second-rate Power, with none so poor to do her reverence. Though this is a consummation devoutly wished by most other nations, and by the world in general, hardly any greater calamity could befall the world and the cause of human civilization. For, with all her faults and errors, all her superciliousness and rapacity, she is today the chief bulwark of freedom and civilization in Europe; the champion of liberty of thought, speech, action and intercourse; the representative of healthy, vigorous, clean human life. Annihilate her influence in Europe, and the despotic empires which are gathering and combining their forces to undo the progress of five hundred years, to crush old popular movements and restore the political claims of the dark ages, would soon have full sway over the old world. One must be blind indeed who fails to see that the efforts of these Powers to isolate Great Britain, while making court to France and Italy, have for their end, not merely the subversion of a powerful rival, but the suppression of all that she represents. The overthrow of Great Britain means the triumph of despotism, with all the oppression, cruelty and barbarism which Russia even now practises or connives at. Well may Russia flaunt her affinity with Turkey! Surely this is a consummation not to be devoutly wished by any friend of humanity, but to be averted by every possible means."

A Divine Fellowship.

Our Bible lesson this week is from John's first epistle. Easily we perceive that the voice speaking here is not Paul's. John's thoughts are cast in another mould, his method of argument and his diction are his own. God does not make mere machines of men when He charges them with His message. Everyone's individuality is sacredly respected. Each writer tells what he has seen and declares what he has known. And as each one has seen something which the others have not seen, or have not seen so clearly, as each one knows something which the others do not know or knows less profoundly, the result of the many voices speaking give a grander music, a richer, fuller revelation of divine truth and grace than any one human voice could have uttered.

Here in the lesson the apostle goes straight to the heart of things, and in a luminous sentence declares the holiness of God. The language is figurative and yet so plain that the wayfaring man or the child shall not mistake its meaning. Light is everywhere the symbol of truth and purity, and in declaring that God is wholly light, and that in Him is no darkness at all, John declares the absolute holiness of God. Such a declaration may sound like a platitude to us. It is indeed, a commonplace of Christianity, but it is none the less important. Belief in the absolute purity and goodness of God must ever be for men a condition of moral living, for how shall men have any incentive to make the earth pure, if they do not believe that the heavens are clean? How shall a man agonize for purity in his own heart if he is not assured that the Ruler of the universe is holy? For lack of the knowledge that John's message contained the world was perishing. The ancient polytheism pictured its gods as lustful, cruel, envious and unjust, as beings possessed of all the degrading vices of their worshippers. No wonder then that ancient paganism grew more and more corrupt, and no wonder that modern heathenism has followed its false deities down into an even deeper degradation. Even the Jew, taught as he was of Moses and the prophets, lacked much of the full Christian conception of God. How much the world needed that message of Jesus with its announcement of God as the "Holy Father"!

A good key-word by which to unlock the treasures of this lesson is *Fellowship*. The apostle declares a fellowship in order that those whom his words reach may enter into it and rejoice in its fulness. It is a Divine fellowship. Its centre is God. It is the fellowship of the Father with the Son and the Son with the Father. Yet men—weak, ignorant and sinful men—may enter into it. This is the gospel of the grace of God which John declares, that men may be God's sons and enter into the fulness of an eternal life. It is a fellowship of light. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. This is the message from the Son of God, the word of Him who knew, as the world in its poor wisdom could not know. God is light, the absolutely pure and perfect One. No flaw, no fleck nor shadow of imperfection is in Him. His infinite fulness fills and overflows all human conception of goodness, and men have no language in which to declare His glory.

It is a fellowship which involves on man's part acknowledgement of sin and the forsaking of darkness for light. The man who denies that he is a sinner deceives himself and makes God a liar, for all the divine revelation in the Old Testament and the New proceeds upon the ground that man has sinned, and that his prime and paramount need is salvation. But mere acknowledgement of sinfulness and profession of fellowship with God amount to little. "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie and do not the truth." It is not submission to some ordinance, it is not the miraculous efficacy of a sacrament upon the heart of an unconscious child that insures fellowship with God. It is much less a question of creed than of conduct. It is not a profession but a life that is required. It is renouncing sin and following righteousness so far as sin and righteousness are known, it is a forsaking of darkness and walking in the light as He is in the light, that conditions fellowship with God and the assurance that the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

It is a fellowship that means help for man. It means that in the largest possible significance of the word. How indeed could it be otherwise when man comes into fellowship with God? The divine ful-

ness comes to the supply of all human needs. The divine love undertakes the cure of human sin. Divine compassion pities man's misery, listens to his complaints and confessions, comforts his sorrow. Divine strength helps his weakness and enables him to set his heel upon the serpent's head. Divine Light enwrathes his being and purifies his soul, and in all his infirmities and, when overtaken by strong temptation he falls into sin, he has as a brother and an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One, whose divine life throbs in his own human being and makes him also a son of God.

Editorial Notes.

—We regret that an over-abundance of matter and a pressure of advertising makes it necessary to hold over to another issue some contributions which are in type.

—Our esteemed brother, Rev. P. S. MacGregor, will perceive that we have found a better place than the waste basket for his contribution. Our readers, we feel sure, will be glad to hear from him again.

—Many of our readers will learn with deep regret of the death of Rev. Michael Gross, late of Surrey, Albert County, of whose life and labors a brief sketch appears in another column. Bro. Gross was a man highly and justly esteemed, and one who will be sincerely mourned. To the bereaved friends in their affliction we desire to tender Christian sympathy.

—Excavations at Windisch, the old Roman colony of Vindonina in the Swiss Canton of Aargau, have led to the disinterment of large Roman villas and an amphitheatre, besides a large quantity of coins, pottery, bronze and ironware. Among the things thus brought to light are some large silver vessels, which are said to be unequalled except in the famous German treasure trove of Hildesheim, brought to light in 1868.

—Mr. Gladstone's health is reported to be considerably improved since his arrival at Cannes, in the South of France, where he and Mrs. Gladstone are spending the winter. His neuralgic pains are leaving him and he finds himself able to resume literary work. For his long article on Arthur Hallam's influence on Tennyson, which is to appear at Christmas, it is said that Mr. Gladstone receives eighteen cents a word. From this it would appear that the "Grand Old Man" is able still to earn a very comfortable living by means of his pen.

With this issue the length of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR's columns is increased by nearly an inch, which both improves the form of the paper and adds in all two or three columns to its reading matter, facts which no doubt our readers will know how to appreciate. It affords us pleasure to state here that the relations entered into by the Maritime Baptist Publishing Company at the beginning of the year with the Messrs. Paterson, printers, have proved highly satisfactory. The paper itself has borne weekly witness that the printers' work has been faithfully done. Beside printing the MESSENGER AND VISITOR, Paterson & Co. carry on a considerable job printing business, for which they have excellent facilities; and any of our readers who have work to be done in that line can be sure of having their orders satisfactorily executed at 92 Germain Street.

—Those who have seen and examined the Illustrated Bible, which the MESSENGER AND VISITOR is now offering as a premium, will, we feel sure, admit that its intrinsic excellence and the exceedingly low price at which it is offered fully justify us in specially commending the book to the attention of our readers. Its convenient size for handling, its full, clear type, excellent paper and binding all commend it to the attention of every reader; and its illustrations, which are not mere pictures to please a childish fancy, but many of them of much artistic excellence and real illustrations of the text, add much to its value as a family Bible. Such a book could not heretofore be purchased for less than ten dollars, and in fact, we believe, that such a book has not been obtainable at any price. There are many cases in which no more suitable or welcome Christmas present could be made than this Bible, and the terms on which it is offered are such that many a one by doing a little work at odd times for the paper can obtain the book free.

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