

Messenger and Visitor

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THE BIBLE FOR MAN.

In this scientific age it is impossible that anything in the
form of literature, however long and sacredly cherished,
can escape the ordeal of critical investigation, and the critical
examination of our sacred writings, by reverent and
competent scholarship in the fullest light which archaeology
and all the assured results of modern science can afford
is not something which we need to deprecate. It is wise
for us to regard it rather as being in the providential order
of events. There would be no wisdom and no advantage
in holding a theory of the Bible not in harmony with the
well established results of science. But on the other hand
we need not fear that criticism will destroy the Bible or
make it less valuable to coming generations than it has
been in the past. All that we know of the Bible justifies
the belief that the more profoundly it is studied and the
better it is known the more salutary will be its influence
upon mankind.

What gives the Bible value for men is not simply that it
is a word of God. We can conceive of a revelation of God
made to beings quite different from ourselves, with other
faculties and other needs than ours. Such a word of God
might have little significance and little help for us. But
the Bible is for men and it comes to us through men. Its
value is not uttered from some awful, far-off height and in
language which no man can understand. The voice and
the language are human, and the reverent reader hears God
speaking to him in the Bible, as a man speaks with his
friend. For the divine word comes to us through those
who are touched with a feeling of our infirmities—who
are tempted in all points like ourselves.

The Bible is not something separate or separable from
human life as if the Divine Hand had written the word on
tables of stone or inscribed it on the face of the heavens.
It not only relates itself to human needs, but it grows out
of human experience. Much of it is all quick and tremulous
with human emotion. As one reads its pages he comes in
contact with all sorts and conditions of men. It reflects
the basest and noblest passions of humanity. Every kind
of man may see himself reflected in the mirror which it
holds up to view. It has a voice for every mood of the
devout soul, from its profoundest sorrow to its most exultant
joy. If the Bible is the most divine of books, it is also
the most truly human. Its revelation of God is inseparable
from its revelation of man. It is this that gives the Bible
its unique fascination and value for mankind, it is this
which, to use the phrase of Coleridge, gives it the power
of leading us at greater depths of our being than any other
book.

The Bible is its own most effective vindicator. If men
will but come to it with an open mind and a reverent spirit,
seeking truth with the purpose of conforming their lives
thereto when it is found, the truth and the consequent
authority of the Bible will be made manifest in their con-
sciences. This practical attitude toward the Bible and its
teaching is of the highest importance. It is immeasurably
more important than the critical attitude which approaches
the Bible with the purpose of mastering the principles and
results of historical criticism. We may go further and say
that a reverent attitude toward the Bible and an honest
disposition to accept and obey its truth as far as discovered
is vastly more important than any theory, however firmly
held, of the inerrancy of the Scriptures. It is surely far
better that one should recognize a part of the Bible as God's
truth and faithfully seek to realize that truth in his life
than that he should profess to accept the Book from cover
to cover as unquestionably inspired of God, and then order
his life in utter disregard of its precepts and its principles.

It is recalled that to those who questioned the truth of
his teachings Jesus said: "If any man is willing to do
his will he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God
or whether I speak from myself." The same principle, we
may feel sure, holds true in respect to the study of the
Bible today. The test of true discernment, the condition
of attaining to knowledge and assurance of the truth, is
the willingness to do God's will. Those who go to the

Bible in such a spirit, we cannot doubt, will discover there
treasures far above all that is contained in all other books.
They will find their profoundest experiences interpreted,
their truest aspirations clarified and expressed, their
deepest longings met and satisfied. They will find truth
which is able to make wise unto salvation. They will
not indeed find the answer to all questions, the solution
of all difficulties—for the revelation is not completed and
as yet we see but as in a mirror obscurely—but they will
find the path which leads to repentance and peace. They
will find the bliss of fellowship with God in Jesus Christ,
the illumination of the Divine Spirit and the power of the
eternal life. It is surely of vastly greater importance so to
use the Bible as to secure these results than to be acquaint-
ed with all the processes and results of the historical criti-
cism or even to be able to give unwavering assent to the
doctrine of the Bible's absolute inerrancy.

GREATNESS THROUGH SERVICE.

The lesson of sacrifice and self-abnegation is not easy to
learn, and we need not be surprised if we find, as we do in
our Bible lesson for this week, that the best of the dis-
ciples of Jesus had not mastered the lesson at the time
when they were following their Lord up to Jerusalem to
witness the final scenes in his life and his ministry. And we
must not be too hasty or too severe in our condemnation
of these disciples for this evidence on their part of ambi-
tious self-seeking in respect to the things of the Kingdom.
It is true that the request which they preferred evinced an
ambitious desire to excel their brethren. They were think-
ing of their own interests rather than those of others. They
wanted to be accounted great in the Kingdom of Heaven
and to have the pre-eminence over others. But their aim
was not altogether ignoble, for it was linked to faith and
love. According to Mark's narrative it was just after the
Lord had spoken to his disciples of his approaching suffer-
ing and death that the request of the sons of Zebedee was
preferred. They had heard him declare that he was to be re-
jected by the leaders of the people, that he was to be con-
demned, and after being mocked, scourged and treated
with utmost ignominy, put to death. But this had not
shaken their confidence and hope in Jesus. Still he was
their Lord and King, and they were ready to follow where-
ever he might lead. They would drink of his cup and be
baptized with his baptism. In spite of all that others
might say or do and in spite of all that Jesus had predict-
ed of his own humiliation, they so loved him and so be-
lieved in him and in his ultimate triumph that to have his
promise of the chief places of honor in his coming kingdom
was the object of their highest ambition.

There is another reason, too, why we should not be hasty
to condemn the sons of Zebedee, for in passing judgement
upon them it is quite possible that we should be found con-
demning ourselves. It is not easy always even for those who
are making their pilgrimage in the light of Calvary and
the resurrection to escape the domination of the self-seeking
spirit. How natural it is to desire a position of honor, to
seek a foremost place, to make our service conditional upon
our own estimate of our abilities being recognized and the
place which we think we are fitted to adorn being accorded
to us! Doubtless we have been believed and loved. We
have wept at Calvary, we have rejoiced in the resurrection,
we have seen how in the death and resurrection of Jesus
the Prince of this world has been judged. But do we quite
succeed in gaining the mastery over that old self which so
persistently seeks its own aggrandizement? How apt we
are to demand that we shall have a seat of honor or at
least a comfortable position as a condition of rendering
cheerful service to our Lord!

We shall do well to ponder deeply the answer of Jesus to
the ambitious request of his disciples. He gently rebukes
their self-seeking spirit, but he does not tell them that
greatness is not attainable in the Kingdom of Heaven, and
he does not discourage the pursuit of the path by which
alone true greatness can be reached. Jesus points out the
mistake of the disciples in supposing that greatness in his
kingdom can be bestowed in any factitious way. Those
who would be nearest to himself in the day of his triumph
must be nearest to him in the day of his suffering
and humiliation. Were they able to drink of his cup and
to be baptized with his baptism? Yes, they said, and
perhaps they were speaking more wisely than they knew,
for they could have known but little of what the grace of
God was yet to do for them. But a seat of honor in the
kingdom of Heaven was not a matter of appointment even
by Jesus himself. It was for those for whom it had been
prepared, it was for those who in the divine way should
prepare themselves for it by most faithfully doing the will of
God. Our Lord is careful to point out to his disciples the rad-
ical difference between the world's idea of greatness and the
idea of greatness which is recognized and realized in the
kingdom of heaven. In the one case the aim is lordship
merely, in the other it is service, and it is true service alone
which gives the right to real lordship. Yet the Christian
is not to serve in order that he may attain to fame as a re-
ward for service. He is to be great by serving. Service is
the proof and the fruit of faith and love. He who serves
best, loves most and is greatest. The supreme greatness of
Jesus is manifested by service. The name that is above

every name belongs to him who took the lowliest place
and became servant of all. Worldly ambition is apt to
pursue its aim in the spirit of the wolf, the robber, the hire-
ling. The Christian if he is true to his divine ideal seeks
to serve in the spirit of the Good Shepherd who is ready to
lay down his life for the sheep.

Editorial Notes.

—In view of the fact that five recent graduates of McGill
University are to go out this summer to Foreign Mission
fields—three to India and two to China—a committee re-
presenting all the Protestant churches in Montreal—has
arranged for a union mass meeting to be held May 26 in
St. James Methodist church, at which the five young men
will speak. It is expected the meeting will be the largest
union meeting ever held in Montreal.

—The Watchman says that Columbian University,
Washington, D. C., which was founded by the Baptists,
and was recently taken out from denominational control,
has now been offered by the Washington Memorial Asso-
ciation half a million dollars to build a group of buildings
on its new location, provided the name be changed to
George Washington University. The matter is under con-
sideration by President George C. Nealham.

—The three great societies of the Baptists of the North-
ern States hold their anniversaries this week in the city
of Cleveland. Cleveland is a city of more than 400,000 people
representing many nationalities. The city has twenty nine
Baptist churches with a membership of 5,400. The meetings
are to be held in the Euclid Avenue church, which is the
largest of the Baptist churches of Cleveland, and is minister-
ed to by Rev. C. A. Eaton, D. D., one of the large number of
able men whom the Baptists of these Maritime Provinces
have given to their brethren in the United States.

—Most persons, even Christians, have a better and a worse
side. When a good man turns the less lovely side of him-
self toward us, and especially if he does it in such a way as
to crowd our own self-esteem, uncomfortably, we may be in
danger of thinking that he is unlovely all the way through.
Under such circumstances it may be profitable to spend a
little time in enquiring whether, after all, he has not many
qualities which entitle him to our esteem. We should not
be too much disturbed if now and then a friend exhibits an
unlovely streak, and if we ourselves are altogether without
blemish that should enable us to deal the more magnani-
mously with others.

—After noting a number of recent cases in which in-
dulgence in strong drink has led to crime or to the sudden
death of the drinker, *The Religious Intelligencer* says: "These
are only sample cases. The same thing is occurring every
day. The process is slower in most cases and the ending is
in less startling circumstances, but the end is the same.
What can be said of a traffic which lives and thrives by
such slaughter? It is the gigantic crime of crimes. And
those who are engaged in it are verily guilty of the blood
of their numberless victims. What should be the attitude
of good citizens towards such a traffic? Think of it.
There is something that every one can do to help destroy
the destroyer. Do it."

—In the course of a brief review of the life of Dean Far-
rar, recently published, the Rev. R. J. Campbell, successor
to the late Dr. Parker at the City Temple, London, says:
"The bibliography of Farrar's works given at the beginning
of the volume exhibits at once the strength and weakness
of his mental powers and range of erudition. His suscepti-
bility to nascent ideas was wonderful, as was his power of
seizing them and giving them expression. But not so was
his capacity for giving them effect. His phenomenal cul-
ture was too general for accuracy, his style too ornate for
intensity, and his mental organism just stopped short of the
highest. His versatile intellect could do almost anything
except turn the first sod in a new field."

—That is a beautiful little parable which J. R. Miller tells
of the palm tree:

"The palm tree, the Arab says, stands with its feet in salt
water and its head in the sun. Oftentimes they cannot drink
the water found in the oasis where it grows, it is so brack-
ish. Then they tap the trees and drink the sweet palm
wine which flows out. The tree, by the magic of its inner
life, so changes the elements found in the unkindly soil
around it that they are made to minister unto its growth,
strength and fruitfulness. It takes the evil of its environ-
ment and transmutes it into spiritual life. It is possible for
us to live as it were, with our feet in the mire of sin's
bitterness, with noxious influences all about us, our life
smitten meanwhile by fierce temptations, and yet yield for
the blessing of others the fruit of love and holiness. If we
have Christ in us there is a magic power in our life which
rejects the evil and assimilates the good, which takes the
evil and transforms it into the good. The world has no
power to harm us if our life be hid with Christ in God."

—In the course of an address delivered at the annual
meeting of the Pastors' College, London, Dr. Robertson
Nicoll, speaking in reference to the zeal for souls, said:
"It is this zeal for souls which glows in Mr. Spurgeon's
writings as perhaps in no others. The fire never burned
low on the altar of his heart. His love for souls came from
his love and devotion to the Son of God who died for them.
When he stood up in the pulpit he spoke as one who was
sure of this opportunity for himself and his hearers, as one