

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCER,

And Bible Society, Missionary, and Sabbath School Advocate.

E McLEOD, Editor.

That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.—PETER.

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Jehovah acknowledged by Cyrus.

We may have some notion of a man's character from the effect which certain intimations produce upon his mind. In what manner, then, did the intimations we have cited affect the mind of Cyrus, when he became acquainted with them? We know that he did become acquainted with them: for this appears on the face of his edict for the restoration of the Jews. Josephus relates, what is highly probable in itself, that when Cyrus became master of Babylon, the Jews there showed and explained to him these prophecies relating to himself. We know, indeed, that there was one man in Babylon who had direct access to him, and who stood high in his esteem; and that it is morally certain that this man would not fail to bring such important and convincing predictions under the notice of the king. This was Daniel, of whose connection with the Persians we shall hereafter have occasion to speak more fully. The effect was as here predicted: that Cyrus saw and acknowledged the Hand by which his path had been marked out, and his steps had been guided; and that he hastened to testify his convictions and his obedience by executing with earnestness the remaining task to which he had been called—that of restoring the Jews to their own land. These are the memorable words of the edict which was promulgated in writing through all his empire:—"Jehovah, the God of heaven, hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah." There is nothing indistinct or uncertain in this. If he had said simply "the God of heaven," we might have been doubtful as to his meaning. It might have been understood of the god he had been used to worship. But here he gives him the name by which the Lord was peculiarly known among the Hebrews—the great name of JEHOVAH; and declares unreservedly his conviction that He was "the God of heaven." Surely this is a great thing.—It shows that Cyrus not only recognised the truth and inspiration of these prophecies, but that they wrought the conviction in his mind that the Jehovah, in whose name they were uttered, was, and could be no other than the "God of heaven." What is the precise amount of the conviction thus effected, which is of necessity involved in this acknowledgement, we shall endeavor to show. It might for a moment be conceived, that, after the fashion of the heathen, when their attention was at any time seriously drawn to the claims of Jehovah, Cyrus supposed that he recognized in Him, under another name, the same supreme God to whom he had been used to render worship. But we shall see that this belief is incompatible with his declaration, when interpreted by the circumstance which surround it.

That this "Jehovah, the God of heaven," and not his own Ormuzd, "had given him all the kingdoms of the earth," he could only have known from Isaiah's prophecy, which declared the intention to give them to him, so long before he saw the light. Indeed, if he believed anything at all of the prophecy, he could not believe that that he owed all his glory and his greatness to his being the predestinated and preannointed agent of Jehovah; and that it was He, and no other, who had made the nations "as dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow."

It was also only through Isaiah's prophecy that he could have realized the conviction that "Jehovah, God of Israel," had, as he says, "charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah." For nowhere else is this coming to him; and nothing but the convincing evidence of this command, being contained in an old prophecy, which, in so many other circumstances, unmistakably indicates him and no other, could have invested this command with its thoughtfulness and sagacious mind, with an authority and power not to be gainsaid. The intensity of his conviction is, however, manifested by the alacrity and fulness with which he discharged the high duty imposed upon him. This gives a marked intensity to the "me," "He hath charged me." "Me," and no other; it was not a duty imperative on any king of Persia, but on him personally and individually.

If we want further proof of the degree of conviction respecting "Jehovah, God of heaven," which the examination of these prophecies wrought upon the mind of Cyrus, we need not go further than the next verse of this famous decree, which renders still more precise his recognition of the God of whom he spoke:—"Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of JEHOVAH, the God of Israel (He is the God of Israel, which is in Jerusalem)." Ezra i. 3. Here the Jehovah, to whom universal and supreme dominion had been ascribed by the title of "God of heaven," is more precisely defined as the One who was generally known as the "God of Israel," whose peculiar people were the Jews, and whose "house was at Jerusalem." Let this be well understood. Among the ancient nations, every one of which had its peculiar god, many knew that Jehovah was the God of Israel, and were not indisposed to regard Him as such. They would admit that He was as much the God of the Hebrews as the gods they severally worshipped were their own; and they knew and admitted, that He had often done marvelously for the deliverance of his people. There are many indications in the Scriptures of this persuasion regarding Jehovah among the nations who had opportunity of being acquainted with the Jews. What they doubted and resisted was, that He was any more than the God of the Hebrews. His claim to universal and supreme dominion—to be the Creator of heaven and earth—and not merely to one among many gods, not only to be the chief and highest of the gods, but to be the only and sole God, beside whom there is none else; this they disputed. This they indeed scouted as a most arrogant and unreasonable pretension made by the Jews on the behalf of the God they served. This cannot be too distinctly borne in mind; for it is a fact which gives its coloring to the whole history of the Jews, and influenced all their relations with the ancient heathen.

But this which they so stoutly resisted, Cyrus frankly and fully admits. He multiplies phrases in which to express the intensity of his conviction. It might

have been enough that he should so distinctly announce that the God of Israel, known by the ineffable name of Jehovah, was the "God of heaven." There could be no misunderstanding this. But in the very next sentence, in which he finds it necessary to describe the Lord as "the God of Israel," he, as if alive to the common notions in this matter, and as if carefully to exclude the remotest chance of being understood by that description to limit his almightiness, throws in the emphatic clause, "He is the God," which can have no other meaning than "He is the true and only God."

What was the practical value of this conviction, what influence it had upon his heart and life, we have no means of knowing. The probability is, that after the first burst of feeling, he was content to retain them as private convictions, without attempting to give them public effect, and without caring to take part in the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion. This he might think himself the more free to do, as the religion in which he had been brought up, presented some of the revolting aspects of the common idolatries, and there was no religion of the ancient world, which, in its external, and some of its internal aspects, approached so nearly to, or rather differed so little from, that of the Hebrews. That his belief was not altogether barren, we have seen by the act of obedience which the decree expressed. The full extent of his intentions and his liberality is hardly visible in the decree, as given in the first chapter of Ezra; but by the copy of it found in the record-chamber at Ecbatana, in the reign of Darius Hystaspis, we perceive that it was his wish that the temple to be built at Jerusalem by his permission and assistance, should be twice as large as that of Solomon.—Ezra vi. 3.

The comparative simplicity of the faith which Cyrus held, and its entire freedom from gross idolatries—which the Persians hated as much as the Jews, and held themselves as strongly bound to destroy and overturn, was possibly, we may reverently venture to conjecture, among the causes which decided his nomination to these high destinies, and may account for his being distinguished by epithets of honorable distinction, never in Scripture given to any idolater.

The principal tenets of that religion as being here ascribed to Cyrus, assumed that the more ancient religion before Zoroaster—known to the Greeks as Zoroaster—was the same in its principles with that which he established on a more regular basis. It has now been proved, however, by Heeren and others, from the internal evidence of the Zendavesta itself, that Zoroaster lived before the time of Cyrus—probably in the time of the Median empire, if not in that of the Assyrians; and there is strong reason to hope that the progress in deciphering the Assyrian and Persian inscriptions will ere long, put this matter beyond all doubt.—Dr. Kitto's Bible Illustrations.

* Quia est versus ille ac solus Deus. Vatabalus in Poli Synopsis.

Farmer Burrit and his Library.

Farmer Burrit was a plain, honest Pennsylvania husbandman, who had been brought up very much as his father and grandfather had been before him—that is, with just enough knowledge to make him a respectable tiller of the soil. For several winters, when farm work was slack, he had been sent to a country school, and having some aptitude, he learned to read and write tolerably well, and to cast up simple accounts. There his literary education ended, and henceforth his energies were devoted to that kind of labour which is so necessary to make a practical farmer. On the death of his thrifty father he entered into the possession of a large and good farm, and in due time married. At the time to which we now refer he had six children all young, who had come into the world alternately, boys and girls, and their father never dreamed of their being brought up in any other way than he and his ancestors had been. Each one was destined to receive a little schooling, and to do a good deal of work, suited to their respective ages. As is unhappily the case with two many farm-houses, there was but a dim light in that dwelling. There was no thought of cultivating the higher faculties of its inmates.—They were to go through the dull plodding life of those who had preceded them; and although the farmer had a good family Bible and Psalm-book, his library consisted of some few ragged elementary school books, with the necessary annual almanac. It was in this state of affairs that an intelligent neighbor, who had turned his attention from a city business to farming, with the view of recruiting his health, became acquainted with Mr. Burrit, and deeply interested in his family. The confidence he inspired, and the kindly feelings he manifested, made him a welcome visitor, and gave him no small influence. In the course of many conversations he threw out occasional hints about the proper training of children and the advantages resulting from cultivating their mental faculties and moral powers. Although he found Farmer Burrit and his wife rather dull scholars, who with difficulty could look beyond the narrow sphere in which they themselves had been educated, he was nevertheless encouraged to give them line upon line, and precept upon precept. Taking advantage of what he supposed a favorable opportunity, he engaged one day in the following conversation with the farmer:

"Neighbor Burrit, I was thinking to-day that you were one of our most substantial and thriving farmers."

"Thank you; I am pretty well to do in the world, but it is because I work my way. I have no idle folks about me."

"True, friend Burrit; and it is commendable in you; but you will excuse me if I say I have felt some surprise that you have not all the implements which a good farmer should have."

"Hav'n't I though? I guess if you will look about you, you'll find I have all I need."

"Well, I have been looking about, and I have not found a half dozen good books in your house."

"O! that's it; and what do I want with books? What's the use of them? I guess they can't teach me farming. Your book farmers ain't worth much

—always trying something new, and coming out with short crops."

"Ah! but, friend Burrit, books teach many good and useful things besides farming; and to tell you the truth, I really think they might be very useful to your children, whom I know you love, and would like to see a little more intelligent than their neighbors. Now, if you would only spend fifty dollars in good books, I will make such a selection as I am sure will be instructive to your children."

"Whew! fifty dollars laid out in books! Why you must be joking!"

"No, I am not; I never was more serious in my life. My only motive for suggesting it is the interest I feel in your family; and I will promise you that if at the end of six years you repent of your purchase, I will refund the fifty dollars and full interest for the whole time."

Farmer Burrit looked puzzled. He respected his neighbor; he knew him to be a good friend, and although he thought the suggestion a foolish one, yet he was touched at the kind interest expressed in his children. After a silence of some minutes, as if he knew not what to say, he replied, "Well, well, I will think of it." A day or two afterward the same friend visited the farmer, and before he had time to return to the conversation, the farmer said, "I have been thinking of what you said, and out of respect to you, here are the fifty dollars for the books; it's a foolish affair, and I wouldn't like to have it get abroad; but," added he, laughing, "I'll hold you to the promise of paying principal and interest at the end of six years. I can't lose much by the investment."

His friend took the money with great pleasure, and he saw that a new light was about to dawn on Farmer Burrit's household. The books were purchased. Besides some good religious books, including several biographies, he had selected a choice volume or two on agriculture and gardening, several on general history and natural history, a few good books of travels, and various other books, some to entertain, and others to awaken thought. In due time they were properly disposed in a little case, and the kind friend already familiar with the children, now carefully showed them how books were to be used, enticed them to read, and even made them promise to spend more of their leisure time in finding out what the books contained. After some difficulty he got things into a right train; both boys and girls began to be interested.

We pass over two years. The seed had been sown, was there any prospect of a harvest? No one can pass Mr. Burrit's farm without perceiving some improvement. The external aspect of the old homestead has a more cheerful and comfortable appearance. Instead of the straggling and unsightly objects which used to be seen around the house, everything has a tidy look. The grass is growing, the flowering shrubbery creeps up the walls and adorns the pathway, the vegetable garden is in better taste, the ornamental accompaniments the useful, and gives evidence that the youngsters of the family have been studying the books on gardening. A glance inside shows a better-regulated family, and more obedient and well-dressed children. Farmer Burrit acknowledges that Thomas, his oldest boy, has got something out of his books which have saved labor, and improved his crops.

Other years pass, and the improvement is still more visible. Mr. Burrit, rather ashamed of his deficiencies, has been reading, and, marvelous to tell, has spent an additional fifty dollars in books. His conversation has become more intelligent. He knows something besides farming, and his whole manner has undergone a favorable change. The religious books have accomplished their mission. Religion dwells in that household, and has its altar there. There can be no complaint that books have rendered the children idle, for they have been a new stimulus to industry. The farm prospers more than ever, and the farmer has abandoned his prejudices against the various improvements in agricultural implements, and has obtained a good insight into the advantages of agricultural chemistry. Mrs. Burrit has become proud of her girls and boys; and well she may be, for there are none like them in the neighborhood—so sensible, so refined in manners, so attentive to their duties, so anxious to excel.

"We should mention that the kind friend who had been the cause of this improvement, had so far recruited his health, that he had returned to his city but he never lost sight of the Burrits. Some twelve or fourteen years after the time when our little narrative begins, he spent a week or two with his old friends. How did he find things then? Changed, most agreeably changed. James, the third son, was obtaining a good practice as the best physician in the neighborhood; Thomas, the eldest, was the farmer, and looked up to as an oracle in all agricultural matters, and had exerted a happy influence in raising the character of all the farmers around him; and Robert the second son—what was he? It is the Sabbath; many vehicles are on the road that leads to the stone church; the house becomes crowded. In the front sits an anxious family—it is the Burrits; the cause is soon apparent—Robert is to preach for the first time in the old church, and in the presence of many a one who knew him when a little boy. Although with some signs of timidity he commenced the service, before he had closed there was many a moist eye in that assembly. He had spoken to them in an earnest, affectionate, and impressive manner—one of the most promising young ministers of the day. Elder Burrit, for he was so officially designated, and his kind-hearted wife, were almost overcome with emotion, as many a

strong hand grasped theirs, accompanied by hearty congratulations.

Next day the city friend smilingly inquired of farmer Burrit why he had not called on him for the fifty dollars with interest in full. With a tear in his eye, and a strong grasp of the hand, he replied "Look at these sons, look at these beloved daughters, look at the old couple, look at my prosperous business, look in upon our minds and changed hearts and you will get your answer."

Religious Condition of Spain.

Fatal influence of Popery.—Testimony of a Traveller.

If there is a nation in the world which should detest Popery, it is Spain; for nowhere has this false and intolerant religion produced more deplorable effects. The Romish church, aided by the Inquisition and the monastic orders, has impoverished, enervated, depopulated and debased Spain. This country formerly possessed a noble, generous population. The various races which composed it, possessed naturally fine qualities. Moreover, the Iberian Peninsula has not only large tracts of surpassingly fertile soil, but rich mines of every kind; and with its numerous fine ports both on the Ocean and the Mediterranean, it might carry on an extensive commerce with all parts of the earth. There was a time, too, when Spain possessed extensive dominion. Christopher Columbus gave her America. Charles the Fifth, and Philip II. annexed a part of Germany, the Netherlands, the kingdoms of Naples, Sicily, &c. What magnificent means of power and prosperity for the people of Spain!

Al! all these advantages of race, position, fertility, commerce, and political supremacy, have been miserably lost. Why? Because Popery, like an insatiable vampire, has from generation to generation exhausted the material and moral resources of Spain. It has driven from this country, by its atrocious persecutions, a multitude of industrious citizens; it has corrupted the intelligence of the nation by keeping it in systematic ignorance; it has discouraged agriculture and commerce by impolitic restrictions on the interchange of products between Spain and other countries; it has sacrificed the resources and the wealth of the Peninsula to the cupidity of the priests and monks. What more shall I say? Popery has been the unmerciful enemy of the Spaniards—a fatal genius, constantly plunging them into shame and misery. And at the present day, alas! Spain, once so heroic, is almost effaced from the list of nations! Poor, disturbed, unhappy, one day in fury breaking its chains, and falling back the next under the priestly tyranny, more miserable and hopeless than before!—Yes, Popery has been the greatest and most terrible curse for this country!

Some Spaniards, I rejoice to say, begin to discover this. But they do not yet see clearly that they must substitute for the Romish church, the principles and doctrines of the Reformation. They feel that the political and moral reformation of their country is impossible, so long as the clergy rule their education and destinies. The members of the middle classes especially, and those who practice the liberal professions, feel a great disgust for all which belongs to the Papal communion. They desire the abolition of the Papal practice of worship, repel the monks, and applaud all measures opposed to the clerical domination; but it is to be regretted that they then too generally fall into the excesses of infidelity, and exchange the maxims of the Inquisition for those of Voltaire. The prospects now, however, are better than they have been; and the most intelligent Spaniards, after remaining for a short time in skepticism, it is hoped will be constrained to acknowledge that a positive religion is as necessary to nations as to individuals.

A minister of the Gospel, who has recently visited Spain in order to know whether copies of the Bible may be freely introduced there, has published his impressions of his travels; and the details which he gives upon this subject are encouraging. "I have," said he, "visited Malaga, Grenada, Madrid, Seville, and Cadiz. Everywhere I was kindly received, and found not only a general desire to possess the holy Scriptures, but also great facilities for distributing them. At Malaga, I saw and heard truly inconceivable things concerning the inhabitants in respect to Popery—I there heard curses uttered against the priests, in the streets and public places. In the city of Grenada I witnessed the greatest indifference to Roman Catholicism. At Madrid, as far as I could judge, Popery does not possess more influence than in the majority of the small provincial cities. Everything respecting the religious edifices, as well as the position and action of the clergy, is the object of truly astonishing indifference."

I doubt whether such a spectacle exists elsewhere in Europe: that is to say: a vast city, Roman Catholic in name, but whose inhabitants generally have no respect for the religious ceremonies of the church, the authority of the clergy, or the pretensions of the Pope. I have often heard them pronounce the epithet *Romish*, in a bitter and scornful tone. One is more and more convinced that the country will have neither liberty nor tranquility until its union with Rome is broken. I have been deeply impressed with the expressions used by the members of the enlightened classes, in speaking of the morality and religion of the nation. They have the sad sentiment of their entire destitution in this respect. They groan under the moral misery and religious degradation into which Spain is plunged.—Cor. N. Y. Observer.

Systematic Benevolence.

Systematic benevolence is a sign of health in the church. There are trusts of different kinds committed to us, and in reference to them all, a strict account must be rendered at the last day. One of these trusts is money. The gold or the silver, be it much or be it little, is the bestowment of God, and he requires us to use it in such ways as he approves. In four ways a man must spend his money:

1. For the support of himself and family.
2. To relieve the poor,—the legacy of the Lord to the church.
3. For the support of the gospel in the congregation where he and his family worship.
4. To send the gospel to every creature, in obedience to the command of Christ, the Head of the church.

In every one of these four ways we are responsible, and, willing or unwilling, we shall have to answer. There will be a twofold questioning, demanding a twofold response. We shall have to answer as to our spending. "Have you or have you not spent your money as God demands of you in regard to these four particulars?" and we must

also answer as to our squandering. "Have you mispent in any of these four particulars, the money which I entrusted to you?" Start not, reader, at the bare thought of squandering in reference to the poor, your church, and the spread of the gospel. You may mispend in these last particulars, as well as in your personal and family outlays. You squander on the poor, when your gifts injudiciously bestowed confirm and aggravate the pauperism of your neighborhood or city, degrading the recipients, and taking from them that stimulus to labour and self-support, of which, whenever the poor are deprived, the ruin of body and soul is hastened. You squander on your church when vast sums are expended in the erecting of costly and gorgeously adorned houses of worship, and that too when you are living in the midst of so dense a population, for whom the supply of churches is so inadequate, that if the Spirit of God were to awaken among them a general desire to visit his courts upon the next Sabbath an immense proportion of that populace could not find even a place to stand within the courts of the Lord. You squander on your church when your expenses of one kind and another are so excessive that the rent of your pews has to be placed at so high a rate, that persons who might otherwise go to church absent themselves. And you squander, also, in regard to the general extension of the kingdom of Christ, if you waste money in wild, impracticable schemes, to the neglect of those plain and divinely-appointed ways of doing good, which need so much and get so little.

Now, as to the amount which we are to give, the conscience of every one must decide for himself; and this decision must be made by each as in the sight of God, and as every one must give account. The reader is not to decide for us how much we must give, nor are we to decide for the reader; but God must decide for us both; and what he would have done will be made known to all who seek to know it by prayer and in faith.

But this must be said: the right discharge of the stewardship of money requires system. We are not to defer the formation of resolutions to give, until such times as the hand of need is stretched out towards us, or the voice of the agent is ringing in our ears. Nor must the amount which we give depend upon the urgency of the applicant, or the zeal or coldness of the agent, or the publicity which may or may not attend our donations. Everywhere, at all times, and about every thing God is speaking to us, and blessed are they who always hear his voice. He tells us how much we are to give of that which he has entrusted to us, and also how it is to be apportioned. He tells us when to give and when to withhold, when to say yes and when to say no. And a good man will heed his voice, will settle upon the firm basis of principle what is to be done, and then if the hand of the truly needy, or the voice of the agent pleading for a good cause, should anticipate him, he will rejoice, and give as his conscience tells him is right. But if the hand or the voice delay to come, then he will go forth and seek them.

If the benevolence of the church were thus systematized, it would be freed from many distressing embarrassments, and would also become a much more efficient agent of good to the world. Let system pervade the whole church in regard to this matter. Let all the church, ministers and people, rich and poor, old and young, acknowledge and act on the principle that it is a duty and a privilege to give in the four ways indicated above. Then should we have enlightened, discriminating goodness, not depending upon outward pressure, and, above all, not depending upon the pressure which the world may be using upon the church, forcing it to duty. No fear but that the treasury of the Lord would then be well supplied. Instead of our Missionary Committees having to tell us of a deficiency of £5000, and our Committee of Education of a deficiency of £3000; instead of the Committee on Church-Extension having to press us, week after week, with so many arguments to arouse us to duty, we should need but a plain, unvarnished story of the wants and the next week our good brethren of these committees would be crying, "Hold, it is enough." That cry was heard once (Exodus xxxvi. 5, 6.) Oh! that it might be heard in our day! What a token of health it would be!—Christian Treasury.

The Lost Star.

Not many years ago, the world was started by the announcement that a star which had shone with brilliancy upon this earth, ever since its creation, had suddenly disappeared from the heavens, and that the place which it once lit up so beautifully was now dark and void. Philosophers could not account for this, unless it had been suddenly destroyed, or it had broken from its moorings, and the power that once held it in its place had now ceased to have any influence over it, and it had wandered away from its sphere, a lost star, traversing the wide unknown, and at last sinking in chaos and darkness for ever.

Not many years ago, there appeared before the world a young man, an advocate of the truth, a preacher of the everlasting gospel.—He was not only popular, but successful in turning many to righteousness. As an evangelist he travelled through many parts of the country, and hundreds were added to the church through his efforts.

His friends beheld him with pride, and prayed that he might rise still higher, and be a still greater blessing to this perishing world. The young man he had been instrumental in converting and turning from the error of their ways looked up to him as a guide, as the star which had, under the blessing of God, been the means of leading them from the chilling midnight of sin, into the more glorious light of the Son of God. But their anticipations were vain. The star disappeared. The young man fell. He forgot that he was a mortal. The church had looked on him as nearly perfect, little thinking that he might fall. The church and the world soon lost sight of him, no one knew whether the lost star had wandered away from its sphere, or had been a wretched convict. The cholera is raging around him, and one dies, and is silently borne out to burial; then another, and another, until by scores he sees his fellow-prisoners borne from their confinement to their graves. The fatal disease has seized him too, and he feels the icy fingers of death grasp for his heart-strings. There is written on his brow an expression of unwonted agony; he raises his eyes and strives for utterance. "What do you wish, Hamilton?" an attendant asked. A new convul-