

# The Intelligencer.

AN EVANGELICAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER FOR NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA.

REV. J. McLEOD.]

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"THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."—Peter.

[EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

SAINT JOHN, N. B., FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1885.

WHOLE No. 1653.

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### THE LAST DAYS OF JACOB.

BY LYMAN ABBOTT.

The Bible "is profitable for doctrine," that is, religious instruction, "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," but it is not equally profitable for all people, at all times. Some of the lessons on which the Old Testament lays no little stress have been so thoroughly learned, and so interwoven into the structure of the modern life and thought, that we have no need to go back and learn them again from the Old Testament. Some things we may leave behind, assuming them to have been already learned. Among these is the lesson which stands out most prominently in the story of Jacob's death.

Prinogeniture, or the right of the eldest son to stand in the place of the father at his death, more or less completely seems to have existed almost everywhere in the world, from the remotest antiquity. It is true that this right has assumed very different forms in different communities. Sometimes being simply the right to property, sometimes simply a right to control or authority, and sometimes a singling of the eldest son as administrator. Thus in India, where the possession of the father is distributed among his children, and where public office or political power belongs to him in his own right, it falls almost universally upon the eldest son. It is not necessary for our purpose here to point out how this right of primogeniture, which seems to be a natural outgrowth of the patriarchal system based upon political principles, was both modified and strengthened by the feudal system in Europe; it must suffice to say that though modified in Europe and abolished in France, it is still the universal custom, though no longer the requirement of the law in England, into which country it was introduced, or, at least, greatly strengthened, at the time and by the conquest of William the Conqueror.

The Jews, probably borrowing their notions on this subject from surrounding nations, or perhaps framing their patriarchal government almost of necessity in accordance with this system, adopted it. The influence of the law, however, is clearly against this system. Even was the first born of Isaac's sons, but Jacob was made the heir of the promise. Reuben was the first born of the twelve patriarchs, and would, therefore, have been the priest and the head of the nation, but he was displaced by his younger brother, Judah, by divine direction to Levi. An hereditary monarchy, though established at a later age among the Jews, was directly inconsistent with the divine purpose as disclosed through Moses. The provision of the Mosaic law, Deut. xxi, 15-17, that the elder son should have twice as much as any of his brethren, must be regarded as a concession to Jewish prejudice, very much as were the laws respecting divorce; and in the story before us, the blessing of the patriarch, in spite of Joseph's protest, as if at this very outset of the founding of the Jewish nation to teach them, and through them to teach future generations, that God is no respecter of persons as the law of primogeniture would seem to imply. But we have all so thoroughly learned this lesson in Canada that we need not dwell upon it here.

Nor do we need more than briefly to note the fact that the laying on of hands as an accompaniment of a benediction or blessing is of very important origin. The raising of the hands by the minister in pronouncing the benediction at the close of the church service and the laying on of hands in an ordination service are relics of this ancient ceremony, not inappropriate if we distinctly bear in mind that the minister here has no claims to have patriarchal or priestly authority.

Turning aside from these subordinate lessons—subordinate in importance at least to us—we may profitably look upon the picture painted with such unconscious artistic power in Gen. xlviii. of a beautiful old age and a saintly death. For this purpose the student should read the whole of the forty-eighth chapter, and couple with it Gen. xlix, 28-33.

Jacob feels that his end is approaching. He summons his children about his dying bed, but first will have a private and sacred interview with his favorite son Joseph and Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. He is a rich old man bequeathing to his sons his property. But what a property! Not lands, not silver, or gold, or any such thing. An intangible and invisible wealth is that which he possesses and that which he bestows. He begins by displaying his title deeds.

God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz (Bethel) in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me, Behold, I will make of thee a multitude of people; and I will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession."

To Jacob his life seems to have begun in the hour when, an exile from home, he saw in the vision that ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and was asked to say, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not." All the life that went before, the life of sorrow and of selfish greed, counted for nothing; it was as if he had been buried for him in the depths of the sea; that he accounted his true birthday when he was new born by the spirit of God from on high. And observe, too, that he indulges in no melancholy retrospect. He does not endeavor to recover from the sea of oblivion the sins and the pain of them again. He has confessed them, they have been forgiven; he has borne the discipline which he needed that he might be healed of his infirmities and diseases, and does not reproach his God by recalling and reciting them. Forgetting those things which are behind, he turns his face to-ward that which is before, and remembers only the promise which God gave to him, and which now he desires to bequeath to his son's sons.

"Thy two sons," he says, "are mine; as though they were mine own sons Reuben and Simeon. Your future children shall be your own, but Ephraim and Manasse are mine, and that which God has promised unto me I give to them and to their posterity." Thus he fills the purpose of his life formed long years before, and gives in reality to Joseph a double possession, the birthright of the eldest brother. And in this God has complete and absolute confidence. Seventeen centuries before Paul wrote his marvelous description to that God who is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," Jacob recognizes the power of his transcending love. "I had not thought," he says, "to see even thy face, and lo, God hath shown me also thy seed."

The God in whom he has this perfect trust, this God who fills his heart with gratitude and joy, is the gift he has received from his own father and now would transmit to his posterity; the God who has given to him and his trinity of blessed influence; the God who has watched and waited for him, and who is now to give him life with all its trials and all its needs; "the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk;" the God who has provided for him, given him day by day his daily food, anticipated his

needs, fed him in the body, and in the intellect, in the taste, in the affections and in the spiritual nature; "the God which fed me all my life long until this day; the God who has done more than watch over him and more than feed him, which has redeemed him from his own evil character, from his own sordid and desecrated nature, by the ministry and discipline of sorrow. "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil," he says; for to him the whole of his life has been a wrestling with the angel of which that night of wrestling at the brook Jabbok was but a shadow, a type. All his life long he has held on to the mysterious, the invisible stranger; would not let him go until the blessing was vouchsafed to him. This God, with his triune presence, his watching, providing, redeeming God, he gives, as it were, to his grandsons. "Let this God," he cries, "bless them as he has blessed me." This is the highest wealth which any dying man can leave to his posterity; this is the best of all possible bequests.

Once, and once only, does a sorrow from the past cast its shadow athwart the peaceful sunlight of the dying man's last hours; it is when he remembers the death of his favorite wife, "Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan, and I buried her there in the way to Ephraim." All joys are forgotten but the sorrow, the love with God, and all sorrow but the sorrow of love in the death of the one who had been for so many years his loved companion. Then he calls his other sons about him, and he speaks to them his last words of promise, and of warning; then peacefully and calmly he gives the directions respecting his own burial, and he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. So great an impression does this peaceful death make upon the minds of the patriarch's descendants that it lived in the memory of men for centuries after. Nearly two hundred and fifty years later, when Balaam from the top of the rocks in Moab beheld the dust of Jacob swarming on the plains below, the sight extorted from his lips, even when he had cursed Jacob's descendants if he had dared to do so, the prayer for a death as peaceful and as beautiful as Jacob's death had been.

Why is Woman Denied the Privilege of "Preaching the Gospel?"

1. Because God has made her the queen of the family, and he would require or authorize the patriarch to take her away from her domestic realm. The family is God's original institution, which has survived the fall. True, there must be a head to it—a power to decide in the last resort—and he has made the husband that head, giving as a reason for such decision, "Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression." But by requiring the husband to love the wife, all domestic and worldly are made impossible, and a but the wishes of her placed in nominal subordination.

God has given to the husband no authority over the wife, excepting that which is administered in love. The wife is made the head of the domestic household, and she reigns there, not to gratify her own willfulness, but to please her husband and to secure the interests of her children and herself. The influence of the true wife and mother is high and potent, and God would secure it and reserve it for that institution, which is at once the place of nurture, and, according to his purpose, the home of all the people in the world. In the family are the people trained for the duties and conflicts of life, and in the family may all find shelter and comfort for the soul. It is God's will that the woman marry, bear children and guide the house." (1 Tim. v. 16.)

Anything which would call women away from the domestic circle, and thus deprive the family and her gentle and potent influence, would be a calamity to the world, and therefore, God forbids her to be a public speaker.

2. Nor is this a sacrifice required at her hands for the public good. The domestic circle is the place for her own development and happiness. That is the soil in which her own gifts and virtues grow and thrive, as well as bear fruit, and there her character expands to the true proportion of womanhood. A gifted lady, new in heaven, once said that that God required of husband and wife the thing that to each was most difficult. Of the husband, who engaged in the business and conflicts of life, was in danger of forgetting his wife, he required love; to the wife he laid stress on that which he knew would to her have the only difficulty, viz., obedience.

He said nothing at all to her of love, for he knew nothing would be more natural and easy to her to render than that. Whatever may be thought of the former part of the statement, all will accept the last proposition as true woman is made to love and be loved. Let her feel sure of the affection of husband and children, and she has all that heart desires for this world. Now, let the wife and mother be enticed from her proper sphere, and be introduced into public life—let her ascend the platform and the pulpit, to say nothing of the stage, and not only will she be a danger to her children, but she will be a danger to the world. The wife and mother, who is engaged in the business and conflicts of life, was in danger of forgetting his wife, he required love; to the wife he laid stress on that which he knew would to her have the only difficulty, viz., obedience.

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and unfavorable for the development of youth; character, it is of the greatest importance that the instructor should be thoroughly practiced in religious matters.

No broader or more inviting fields are open for service to-day than those which the profession of Christian teaching offers. The religion needed for this service is not the mere theoretical, not the sentimental or sensational, but the common-sense, practical presentation of Gospel truth. A religion should be thoroughly taught in our schools that tends to arrest certain evils, such as equivocation, duplicity, and evasion in daily work. In order to this, the instructor must himself be uniformly frank and straightforward; in his heart there must be "no guile." The religion, carried into the minute details of life, makes character transcendent. It cannot justify hidden methods of administration, on the plea of correcting the vicious conduct of the student. The lack of veracity here is simply intolerable, and always and the teacher for the task of exposing evil habits in his school.

About forty years ago Howard Bishop, a devout Christian layman, occupied a chair of instruction in Pennington Seminary, New Jersey. As an illustration of the practical value of such men in the educational work of his name, Bishop was a man of no ordinary caliber. Scores, if not hundreds, were living proof of his influence, and his influence was not confined to his own school. His religion was ardent, yet not ostentatious. His daily life was in itself a demonstration of religious truth. In reproving sin he seemed to preserve an habitual reserve of spirit that made reproval invariably effective, while an honorable respect for his own feelings, and his action. His marked character, his perfect frankness in intercourse; lively interest in the welfare of others; a genial, kindly nature; an all-consuming desire for the salvation of souls; and through gentle indignations, a young success in this life and the hope of glory, he was a man of no ordinary caliber. His religion was ardent, yet not ostentatious. His daily life was in itself a demonstration of religious truth. In reproving sin he seemed to preserve an habitual reserve of spirit that made reproval invariably effective, while an honorable respect for his own feelings, and his action. His marked character, his perfect frankness in intercourse; lively interest in the welfare of others; a genial, kindly nature; an all-consuming desire for the salvation of souls; and through gentle indignations, a young success in this life and the hope of glory, he was a man of no ordinary caliber.

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come. If Christ has not risen, our faith in the New Testament and in the Old Testament is vain; we are yet in our sins.