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CHRIST THE MIRACLE-WORKER.

BY JAMES R. DAY, D.D., CALVARY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, NEW YORK CITY.

This man doeth many miracles.—JOHN xi., 47.

THAT Christ as a historic person lived upon the earth as Homer or Aristotle lived is a fact which compels and receives the credence of all candid people.

The myth theory has been laughed out of intelligent criticism because it would destroy all histories, however modern and authentic. Archbishop Whately, in his "Historic Doubts," answered Renan before Renan was born and Strauss when he was but a lad. He showed that the reasoning that rejects Christ would disprove the existence of Napoleon. So the ingenious attempts to prove that Christ was but a product of His time, the personified ideal of a far-off age in a moment of religious and moral exaltation, has never made a very profound or general impression upon the world. Not only because no age has ever been equal to such a concept, but because it carries down in a confused wreck all history. This is seen and admitted, and from this ground the enemies of Christ have ingloriously retreated. But what they have failed to achieve by a denial of the historic Christ by the myth argument, they hope to accomplish by a pseudo-faith. The Saviour existed. He lived and taught among men, but He was only the best of His kind, they say. He was very perfect, very pure, and of such wisdom as the world has never seen beside, but He was divine only as any body that is good and true

found on a jar buried in the floor of a room over which was a papyrus of the XIIth dynasty in the rubbish. All the evidence here points to this alphabet having been used *before* 2000 B. C. Foreign influence is shown by non-Egyptian weights being found here. Some Mediterranean pottery was also discovered, quite different from that of the XIXth dynasty town, and presumably earlier in style. Considering that the Cypriote alphabet must be earlier than the Phœnician settlement in Cyprus, as otherwise it could not have obtained a footing in face of the Phœnician alphabet, we need not deny the possibility of its existence at such a date as we here arrive at."

Such a philological disclosure, equally interesting as that we made at Naukratis touching the earliest development of the Greek alphabet, is likely to "call out" the few Cypriote scholars—such as my friend, Dr. Isaac H. Hall, of the New York Metropolitan Museum—and some of the text-reading orientalists. Verily, what a diversity of interests, archæological and otherwise, is attached to the many secrets of the untouched mounds and tombs of that great mother land of the nations. Mr. Petrie is a great economist, making some hundreds, or a few thousands, of dollars work miracles with the pick and spade.—*The Living Church.*

CHRISTIAN EDIFICATION

The Girdle of Love.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D. (PRESBYTERIAN), BROOKLYN, N. Y.

Sensible people like to be decently dressed. While fops and fools delight in fineries, and slovens are content to be untidy, it is a mark of self-respect to wear clean raiment. The first thing which the happy father—in the parable—did for his returned prodigal son was to free him from his tatters, and to "put the best robe" on him. The inspired writers often use dress as a type of character. The self-righteousness of the sinner is described as "filthy rags"; conversion is described as a washing of the robes and a putting on of Christ; in Heaven the redeemed are said to be arrayed in clean linen and white, which is the righteousness of the saints. When Paul writes to his Colossian brethren he exhorts them to "put on, as God's elect, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and long-suffering." Having described these articles in the Christian's wardrobe, he sums up by saying (according to the accurate text of the Revised Version): "Above all these things put on *love*, which is the bond of perfectness."

The Orientals were accustomed to wear loose, flowing garments, and when any strenuous exertion was required they gathered the folds of their dress and bound a girdle about their loins. The girdle was a vitally important article for active working or alert walking. As the Oriental girdle holds the flowing robes together so does the indispensable grace of love bind all the other graces and give them "perfectness"; it knits the Christian's good qualities into harmony, gives beauty to his character, strength to his purposes, and steadfastness to his conduct. Now abideth faith, hope, love, and the greatest of these is love. It is the keynote of all Bible piety. Jesus sheds abroad His love into our hearts as a living flame to burn out our selfishness, and to warm our affection to a steady glow. The supreme test of obedience is: "If a man love Me he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The true way to know people is to love them. The closer we get to them the more we discover of their best qualities. It is only by the eye of love that we can see Jesus as He is, in His infinite beauty, and through the intimacy of our inter-

course with Him, we become insensibly conformed more and more into His likeness "as by the spirit of the Lord."

1. There is but one way to become effective in Christian work, and that is to bind on the girdle of love. Whether you are a pastor with a hard field to till, or a Sunday-school teacher watching over a mission-class of unruly lads, or a philanthropist laboring to correct obstinate wrongs and to rescue the perishing, you must learn to work *heartily*. A man who thoroughly loves Christ will love to labor for Him, and no more thinks of seeking a substitute than he would of asking another person to eat a dish of peaches and cream for him. The reason why the duties of Christianity become so irksome to many a church-member is that he has no heart in them. They are tug and task-work. He goes about them as he would at swallowing a pill. If such drudgery is abhorrent to the performer it is still more abhorrent to Him who loveth a cheerful giver and a willing worker. "Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." That made the labors light. If you would be a lightsome laborer in your Master's vineyard you must give that Master the first place and the warmest place in your heart. Do you love Him even a little? Then study your blessed Saviour as He hangs bleeding for you on the cross, until you love Him more. There may have been but a slight heart-beat in Jacob's breast when he first met Rachel at the well, but the slight feeling grew into an affection that left that heart broken when he hung over his dying wife on the way-side to Bethlehem. So may your love to the crucified Jesus grow until it girds about your whole soul, compacting all your energies, intensifying all your powers, and giving you a holy, swift-footed alacrity in His service. Above all, and over all, put on the girdle of love, which is the bond of perfectness.

2. Let me remind you also that the best inspiration to obedience is the compulsion of love. The best-ordered and happiest household is that which is bound together by this golden girdle. Parents!

what kind of obedience do your children render you? Do they only mind you when your eye is on them, or a rod is lifted over them, or a sharp threat is shot at them? Then they are but slaves or sneaks, and as soon as your eye is off them your authority is a wisp of straw. If your boy loves you then your hand is on him a hundred miles off as truly as if he were at your side. The boy at school or college who is not held by any regard for his father's or mother's wishes and injunctions is a scape-o'-grace whom no faculty can control. This touches the core of our Christian professions. My friend, are you only held to the performance of your religious duties by self-interest, or by respect for public opinion, or by the frail withe of church-membership? Then Christ cannot trust you and will not answer for you.

Here lies the radical difference between church-members. The one class are mere eye-servants. They seem to be trying to find out just how little they can do, and yet keep up appearances and manage to scrape through into Heaven. They are minimum Christians, and if saved at all, a minimum heaven is all that they can expect. For want of the girdle of love, they are all falling to pieces.

On the other hand the obedience which is prompted by love, never limits itself to the exact letter of the obligation. When you pay a note at the bank, you pay only the precise sum on its face; but when you make a gift of affection, the larger you can make it the better. Look at the difference between those who work for mere money pay, and those who work for the love of what they are doing, or of those for whom they labor. The hireling looks at his watch and says: "It is six o'clock; my day's work is over; I'll quit," and he flings down his tools and goes home. But an artist is so enamored with his picture that he is willing to sit till midnight at his easel. Sir Isaac Newton was so absorbed in his favorite studies that his servant had to arouse him and persuade him to go and eat his meals. Love of truth was more to him than food. Did your dear old mother ever weigh out her devotion to you as a grocer weighs

out tea—carefully watching the scales lest he give a few grains too much? Could you hire a good wife for wages? Ah, there is but one coin that passes current in a true woman's heart, and that is the pure gold that bears the image of him she loveth, and which has been burned brighter in the fires of trial. Christ asks nothing of us, and delights in nothing from us that is not rendered with the "willing mind" of grateful affection. Love rejoiceth to bear burdens for Him who bore the bitter death of the cross for us. Love never reluctantly murmurs "*must*

I do this?" rather does it look up into His sweet face and inquire: "Master, *may* I do this for Thee?" That Master is coming soon, and His reward is with Him to give to those who watch and work and long and wait for His appearing. Wherefore let us, above all things, bind on the girdle of love, which is the bond of perfectness.

"Ah, how skillful grows the hand
That obeyeth love's command;
It is the heart and not the brain,
That to the highest does attain,
And he who follows love's behest
Far excelleth all the rest."

—Independent.

◀* SUNDAY SCHOOL CAUSE *▶

LIGHT ON THE INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

BY ALFRED H. MOMENT, D.D. (PRESBYTERIAN), BROOKLYN, N. Y.

Nov. 3,

David's Rebellious Son.—II. SAM. xv., 1-12.

1889.

I. Absalom. Observe: (1) He was David's son by a heathen wife, Maachah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur, a country in Syria, east of the Sea of Galilee (II. Sam. iii., 3). (2) We may believe that this heathen mother had much to do with the formation of her unfortunate son's character. (3) His was a home of polygamy (II. Sam. iii.), which is ever a curse to children. (4) David's great sin (II. Sam. xi.) must have had its corrupting influence on his sons. It is believed that David's fall took place about a dozen years prior to Absalom's rebellion. These facts should be pondered in view of how the man in question turned out. Too much stress cannot be placed on the importance of pure, good homes in view of the children's future. (5) But it should also be borne in mind that David, notwithstanding the fact that he married many wives and that he was guilty of the great sins recorded against him, was a man of deep spiritual life, full of the wisdom and of the power of God. Those sons who turned out so disgracefully, must have received from their father the truth which he himself knew so well, and must have beheld in him all the love and tenderness of one who was a man after God's own heart. (6) Though the bad influences of his home were yielded to by Absalom, yet had he been

so disposed, he saw and heard enough in his youth to make him a better man. (7) It is said of him (II. Sam. xiv., 25, 26), that he was the handsomest man of his times and that he gave special care to the cultivation of his hair. All this is recorded of him that we may see how vain he was of his personal appearance, how he gave all attention to his exterior. He was a sort of a fop. (8) Absalom's murder of his half-brother, Amnon, was, no doubt, in part prompted by the outrage done to his sister, Tamar; but his supreme vanity caused him to place his eye on the throne of Israel, and with a hope of clearing the way to it, he slew the heir. (9) Because of his murderous deed on Amnon, he was banished from the family of David (xiii., 37, 38). To his heathen relations in Geshur Absalom went, where he remained three years (xiii., 38). This we may suppose gave the finishing stroke to his character, making him more godless than before, and more and more divorcing the affection of his heart from his father and fostering the desire of becoming himself king of Israel. (10) Through the sly work of Joab and the mediatorial efforts of the woman of Tekoah, Absalom was restored to the court. (See chapter xiv.) We read that the king kissed Absalom (xiv., 33). That was a kiss of reconciliation. It should however never have been