

THE LUTHERAN VISITOR.

Revs. Rude & Miller, Editors.

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Selections.

The Christian's Knowledge.

How we love to read those verses in the Bible in which we find the words "I know"! There are so many things which we do not know, so much uncertainty in this life of ours, that we need often to be reminded of the truths of which we have a positive knowledge. It is true that even the christian is ignorant of many truths concerning which every mind is curious, such as the place, time and manner of death, the locality of heaven and its employments, besides very many of the grand doctrines of our religion, which are too vast for us to grasp while imprisoned in the flesh. "Here we see through a glass darkly." "We walk by faith, not by sight." But while this is true, on the other hand it is not true, as is so often claimed by the unbeliever, that a religious life is one only of feeling, excitement and pleasant anticipations, but it is a life of profound and positive knowledge of many truths, whose reality even is hidden from the conception of the unregenerate soul. We too often use that little word "hope," as related to the christian, as if it were merely expectancy, but not an assurance, as if doubts hung over the mercy-seat, and salvation might be or might not be true. But Paul describes the christian's hope as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, a hope which had become an assurance, because rooted in the soil of positive knowledge, regarding certain truths, whose certainty form the stability and joy of the christian's life.

Dear reader, if you have only a trembling hope in Christ, and know nothing of assurance, never able to say, "I know," but only, "I hope," let me call to your mind those glorious passages in God's word which reveal those truths concerning this life and the heavenly, which you are permitted to know and rest upon as on the solid rock.

Rom. vii: 18. Our own spiritual poverty and guilt. The prodigal son had taken one step homeward when he came to himself and knew that he was dying amid the husks. Glory to God for the knowledge of our nothingness!

1 John iii: 5. "Manifested to take away our sins. I know that my sins formed a part of the heavy load which was laid on the substitute, the Lamb of God."

1 Peter i: 18, 19. The blood of Christ is our sufficient ransom, and hence that precious blood cancels all the debt, which is all paid and forever paid.

Job xix: 25. We have a living Redeemer—the grave could not hold Him, and He ever liveth our High Priest. His pierced hands and feet ever pleading of our justification.

John ix: 25. 1 John v: 19; iii: 14. Passed from death unto life. What ever skepticism and infidelity may say, the christian knows that he is a new creature, that he has received a new heart, and that the heavy load of sin has rolled away. There can be no doubt of this, for he loves what he hated, and hates what he loved, and Jesus is the chief among ten thousand.

2 Tim. i: 12. He has a positive acquaintance with this Saviour, a sweet knowledge of His power and love, and can leave all fears of sin and death with Him, for He is able to keep that which we commit to His care. The fear of dying, therefore, only proves that we do not know Christ, but we may know him and be "always rejoicing."

2 Corinthians xiii: 5. 1 John ii: 5; iv: 13. Christ in the believer, an abiding guest; our souls His temple and His home. We know this, as truly as Mary and Martha knew when the humble home in Bethany was honored by His presence, for they heard His voice and were strengthened by His words. So the believer knows that Christ is in him, because he feels His presence, hears His whispers of love, and leans upon His omnipotence.

Rom. viii: 1. He in us and we in Him, we know that there can be no condemnation, and away go all fears of the judgment, all terrors of the law, for we shall be covered in the robe of His righteousness. But it may be said, although the Christian has no fear of sin, of death, of the judgment, yet these sublime truths do not lift him above the sorrows and tears of the earthly life. No! but he does not meet the storms which sweep across the daily ex-

perience as the sinner meets them, for he knows that the Father's love plans the trials as well as the joys. Ps. cxix: 75; 2 Cor. iv: 17, 18; Rom. viii: 28, and therefore the christian can kiss the rod which smites; can glory in tribulations, and rejoice to become a partaker in the sufferings of Christ.

But when the physical drops away in death, will the soul sleep in the grave with the dust until the resurrection morning! This is a matter of positive knowledge with the believer.

2 Cor. v: 1, 6. The taking away the scaffolding does not disturb the spiritual building within, and angels will bear it up to His presence to be forever with the Lord. It matters not what agonies are associated with the fact of dying, though the silent form bring home, the question, is not the spirit dead also, or sleeping, and perhaps the darkness and stillness of the grave make us shudder for a moment, yet "we know." Glory to God for this assurance, "we know that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord," and we are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Dear friend, meditate more and more upon the truths which the christian knows as immovable and eternal facts, and which are so glorious, that he who believes in and lives upon them can never be gloomy or fearful. Let me repeat them once more.

I know that he was manifested to take away my sins.

I know I am redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

I know that my Redeemer liveth.

I know that I have passed from death unto life.

I know whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.

I know that He dwelleth in me, and I in Him.

I know that there is no condemnation, because I am in Him.

I know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

I know that at death I shall fly heavenward, and see Him as He is, and be with Him for ever.

Let us be satisfied with what we know, and be willing to leave the mysteries to be solved, when, as scholars, we sit at His feet, and learn from His lips the complete story of redeeming love.—*The Interior.*

The Lord's Day—A Parable.

"O dear, I am so very tired of the Sunday!"

So said Willie, a playful little fellow who was longing for the Sabbath to be over, that he might return to his play.

"Who wants to hear a story?" said a kind friend who was present.

"I, sir," and "I," and "I," said the children as they gathered around him. Then he told them a parable.

Our Saviour, when he was on earth, often taught the people by parables. The parable now told to the little boys was of a kind man who had some very nice apples hanging upon the tree. A poor man was passing by the house of the owner, and he stopped to admire this beautiful apple-tree. He counted the golden pippins. There were just seven of them. The rich owner could afford to give them away, and it gave him so much pleasure to make this poor man happy that he called him, and said, "My friend, I will give you a part of my fruit." So the man held out his hand and received six of the apples. The owner had only kept one for his own use.

Do you think the poor man was grateful for this kindness? No, indeed! He wanted the seven pippins all for himself; and at last he made up his mind that he would watch his time, and go back and steal the other apple.

"Did he do that?" said Willie, very sorry. "He ought to be ashamed of himself! I hope he got well punished for stealing that apple."

"How many days are there in the week, Willie?" said his friend.

"Seven," said Willie, blushing deeply; for now he began to understand the parable, and he felt very uneasy. Conscience began to whisper to him, "And should not a boy be ashamed of himself who is unwilling on the seventh day to lay aside his play! Would he not be punished if he will not remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy?"

Christ the End of the Law for Righteousness.

Christ having kept the law of God pure, without spot or blemish, his life stands instead of the law. He is the personification of the law to the believer, which he can peruse not in words but in a living example. This is a great advantage to the successful keeping of it, and is calculated to secure a more perfect performance than when it had its exposition in bare language alone. For looking upon the law itself, our eye is set upon an object which, though holy and pure, is cold, helpless and cheerless; but looking on Christ's exemplification of it, our eye is set upon an object warm with life, friendly, most affectionate and dear to every feeling of the heart. We have to deal no longer with written letters, construed into mental conceptions, abstract and formless, but with a fellow mortal, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, smarting at every pore for his love of us, yet still holding steadfast his obedience unto the end. Nor does the gospel, of which Christ is the model, drop one tittle of the law, but folds it all up in graceful attractions, and keeps it steadfast, and translates it out of language, and makes it intelligible to the heart of the fallen creature. For if man had not fell from his original state, this law which seems to us so stern, would have been merciful, kind and good as well as just. For peace is sweet, and chastity is good, and forgiveness is kind, and truthfulness is the bond of confidence and love. These requirements are in themselves as much of the essence of mercy as is the gospel. The law is the gospel to the unfallen. The gospel is the law to the fallen. The law is God manifested in words, the gospel is God manifested in the flesh. Around the purity of the law, Christ arrayed everything that is pleasant, pure and lovely, and of good report.

Wherever it comes, christianity works amelioration in literature and laws, in social institutions, in family and social life. Christian men themselves have often been "unfaithful to their faith, they have corrupted its truths, and abused its influences; and on the principle that the best things are capable of the grossest perversions, they have often become worse than the heathen; but in proportion as they have maintained its principles and realized its spirit, it has been a power that no form of human evil could withstand.

Nay, the proof is in every church, in every social circle, almost in every family; the phenomena of religious conversion are as indispensable as they are unaccountable, save on the supernatural theory of christianity. The truths of christianity read in the Bible, or listened to from a preacher, work the most marvelous transformations; they put an arrest upon sinful habit and feeling, and often in a single day change the entire life of a man. Conversations as sudden and as radical as that of Saul of Tarsus are continually occurring. A godless, prodigal, hardened man, whose life has been given up to evil, and whose mind has scarcely ever been troubled about religion, is suddenly arrested by some truth of christianity, subdued into thoughtfulness and penitence for sin. Those who yesterday heard him blaspheme, to-day bear him pray. The language has become upright, the lips speak the truth, and the hard, grasping, selfish man becomes pitiful and benevolent; the sinner has become a saint; and between his old life and his new there has come to be in a few hours "a great gulf fixed." And the reality and thoroughness of the change are attested by a long subsequent life of humble holiness, consecrated service, patient endurance, and grateful love.

Glorying in the Cross of Christ.

"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He hath ever been the hope, expectation, desire, delight and rejoicing of true believers. The promise of him was all and enough, that God gave Adam in his extreme distress, for his relief and comfort. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Eve perhaps thought that the promised seed had been born in her first born, when she rejoiced and said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Noah being born, his father Lamech rejoiced and said, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground that God hath cursed, he rejoices in him who was to take away the curse," by being made a curse for us. When Abraham, in the height of his glory, was returning from the conquest of the kings of the east, that had come against the confederate kings of the vale of Sodom, God appeared to him with this glorious heart-cheering promise, "Fear not, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." What could his soul desire more, but oh! he cries, as Reuben afterwards, upon the loss of Joseph, "The child is not, and whither shall I go?" "Thou hast promised that in my seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." If that promise fail, what good will all other things do me. Thus it is said he rejoiced to see the day of Christ; he saw it and was glad, the thought of the coming Saviour through the distant space of 2,000 years, was the joy, delight and comfort of his heart. Jacob, when blessing his sons, said, "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be on the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee," &c. It would be an endless task to instance in particulars; good old Simeon sums up the whole matter, "Christ is God's salvation and Israel's glory." He is the desire of all nations, him whom they delight in, worshiped by all the heavenly hosts. "I heard the voice of many angels round the throne, and living creatures, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven and earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea,

and all that are in them, heard I saying: honor, glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. And the living creatures said, Amen, and the four and twenty elders fell down and worshiped him that liveth forever and ever."

"Millions amid his presence stand, And feel, while they adore, Fullness of joy at God's right hand, And pleasures ever more."

Influence of Christianity.

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Writing to the Corinthian christians, the Apostle Paul speaks of "thieves, and covetous, drunkards, revellers, and extortioners," and says, "Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God." And there is scarcely a christian pastor who could not speak of similar transformations in some members of the flock.

How are these to be accounted for? No other truths, no other books produce radical changes of spiritual character. Read to a man Plato, or Shakespeare, or Milton, or Bacon, they affect him but little; read to him the New Testament, he becomes "a new creature in Christ Jesus." In the light of these phenomena, are we not justified in applying to the assailants of christianity the wise words of a calm observer of its earlier phenomena, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for, if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye can not overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."—*Rev. Henry Allen, D.D.*

DETRACTORS.—St. John Chrysostom advises us to give to detractors the following warning: "Have you anything good to say of you brother, I am ready to listen to you, my heart is open to receive your communication with gladness; if it be anything bad, my ears are shut against you; they refuse to be soiled. What profit am I to derive from hearing that some one has behaved badly? I was ignorant of it, and you telling me of it only makes me sad. Why should you not speak to him? Let us meddle in our own business only; we have quite enough to give an account of our own thoughts, words, deeds and omissions; let us bring that restless curiosity and scrupulous examination to bear on our own conduct, instead of setting up ourselves as censors of others, and spending so much valuable time in scrutinizing and driving into the deepest recesses of other people's hearts."

Testimony for Christianity. Newton was a christian! Newton, whose mind burst forth from the fetters fastened by nature upon our finite conceptions. Newton, whose science was truth, and the foundation of whose knowledge of it was philosophy—not those visionary and arrogant presumptions which too often usurp its name, but philosophy resting upon the basis of mathematics, which, like figures, can not lie. Newton, who carried the line and rule to the uttermost barriers of creation, and explored the principles by which all created matter exists and is held together.

But this extraordinary man, in the mighty reach of his mind, overlooked, perhaps, the errors which a minute investigation of the created things of this earth might have taught him. What shall then be said of the great Mr. Boyle, who looked into the organic structure of all matter, even to the inanimate substances which the foot treads upon? Such a man may have been qualified to look up through nature to nature's God. Yet the result of all his contemplations was the most confirmed and devout belief in all which the atheist holds in contempt, as despicable and drivelling superstition.

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But this error might, perhaps, arise from a want of due attention to the foundations of human judgment, and the structure of that understanding which God has given us for the investigation of truth. Let that question be answered by Mr. Locke, who, to the highest pitch of adoration and devotion, was a christian—Mr. Locke, whose office was to detect the errors of thinking, by going up to the very fountains of thought, and to direct into the proper track of reasoning the devious mind of man, by showing him its whole process, from the first perceptions of sense to the last conclusions of ratiocination; putting before him the principles of the moral rules for the conduct of human judgment.

But these men, it may be said, were only deep thinkers, and lived in their closets, unaccustomed to the traffic of the world, and to the laws which practically regulate mankind. Gentlemen! in the place where we now sit to administer the justice of this great country, the never-to-be-forgotten Sir Matthew Hale presided; whose faith in christianity is an exalted commentary upon its truth and reason, and whose life was a glorious example of its fruits; justice, drawn from the pure fountains of the christian dispensation, will be, in all ages, a subject of the highest reverence and admiration.

But it is said that the christian fable is but the tale of the more ancient superstitions of the world, and may be easily detected by a proper understanding of the mythologies of the heathen. Did Milton understand those mythologies? Was he less versed than Mr. Paine in the superstitions of the world? No. They were the subject of his immortal song; and though shut out from all recurrence to them, he poured forth from the stores of a memory rich with all that man ever knew, and laid them in their order as the illustration of real and exalted faith, the unquestionable source of that fervid genius which has cast a kind of shade upon all the other works of man.

"He passed the bounds of flaming space, Where angels tremble while they gaze—He saw, till blasted with excess of light, He closed his eyes in endless night."

But it was the light of the body only that was extinguished; "the celestial light shone inward and enabled him to justify the ways of God to man."

Thus you find all that is great, or wise, or splendid, or illustrious, amongst created beings; all the minds gifted beyond ordinary nature, if not inspired by its Universal Author for the advancement and dignity of the world, though divided by distant ages and by clashing opinions, yet joining, as it were, in sublime chorus to celebrate the truths of christianity, and laying upon its holy altars the never-fading offerings of their immortal wisdom.—*Lord Erskine.*

"Must Have."

"If you would pray down blessings on your family, give up your 'must have,'" said a christian adviser, whose experience in the divine life made him an able guide.

Sometimes christian parents ask for the conversion of their children with tearful pleading. At the same time they say, not always so that man can bear, "I 'must have' health, and position, education, and business success for my son. He 'must have' the means of making an ambitious marriage, and supporting his family in ease and plenty. My daughter 'must have' advantages, accomplishments, a brilliant career in society, the admiration of friends, and marriage with easy, pleasant surroundings."

These "must have's" are heard by Him who seeth the heart. They drown by their noisy clamor the petition for the soul's salvation. Prayer is "the burden of a sigh, the falling of a tear." The wish of the heart, the half-uttered desire is prayer. What we seek all day long, what we toil and strive for in training our children, is in God's sight our life-prayer. The cry we utter when they are in danger of death, or when they threaten to disgrace the family name, or when we see for the time being their want of preparation to meet God in judgment, is drowned in the "must have" which controls the ordinary life.

There is but one "must have" for the christian parent. We "must have" the salvation of the souls of the sons and daughters growing up about us. We "must have" heaven for them. We "must have" the Holy Spirit's influence, which is offered us with infinite freeness and fulness. We can leave the worldly prosperity of our children with One who gave his only Son for us. Let christian parents cry, "Convert my child, even if it takes his health, his wealth, his position, and all those things that perish with the using. Heed not my worldly longings, for they are of the earth, earthly. Grant not my vain desires, lest I get leanness of soul, and the eternal death of a beloved child as my portion."—*American Messenger.*

The Pious Dead.

We can not conceive of a dead soul; to our mind the word soul is inseparably associated with intelligent, active existence. Therefore we are not of the opinion that the soul at the death of the body passes into a state of torpidity and unconsciousness, but remains in the full possession and exercise of all the faculties and powers it had while in the body.

If the soul thus separated from the body is the soul of a believer, it immediately goes to Paradise, agreeably to our Saviour's promise to the converted thief on the cross, "to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," and as the apostle Paul when he was caught up to Paradise, said that he was "caught up into the third heaven," the dwelling place of the Divine Majesty; and as the promise to those who overcome is, "they shall eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God," the soul of the believer at death passes into glory, a state of absolute exemption from sin and suffering, and of great exaltation and blessedness.

It is admitted there must be a great sanctifying work wrought at death in the believer, to purify him from all sin, but no greater than was wrought in the thief, to qualify him for the presence of the Saviour in Paradise; and the same supernatural power which achieved the one can achieve the other. What a marvelous spiritual transformation was suddenly wrought in Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus; and it may be that no greater change will require to be wrought in the believer's soul emancipated by death from the depraved appetites and passions of the flesh, to make him, perfect in holiness, than was experienced by Saul, and made him instead of a blood-thirsty persecutor of Christians, an eminent apostle of Jesus Christ.

That in this blessed and eternal home of the righteous there will be mutual recognition we are warranted to believe; for why should saints purified and perfected in heaven know less than they know while on the earth? why longs the pious soul for a higher companionship than earth affords? and when Moses and

Elias conversed with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, were not these inhabitants of the celestial world well acquainted with each other? We rejoice in the faith that mutual recognition and communion are enjoyed by the redeemed above. What remains, eternity will reveal!

God's Work Goes On.

It is not optional with you, my friend, whether you shall live on a redeemed earth, and in times on which the ends of the age are come; it is only optional with you how you shall live here. It can not be with you as if your Saviour had not sanctified the world with His feet, and sweetened its air with His charity, and judged it by His Cross. These supernatural facts are a part of the estate you occupy. Neither your ingratitude nor your caprice can root them out, or clear you of the accountability they bind upon you. Your indifference may blind your eyes or paralyze your limbs; it does not slide you out of the range of the mediatorial ministry, or of the reckoning that must follow it. In any case, therefore, the scales of the choice do not hang evenly balanced. Your right decision is already weighed with the coming of the Son of Man. The way of life has His light upon it. Choose you this day whether you will serve, in joy, the Master of the house, or turn your back upon it and upon Him! If you have wandered some distance away, turn you, for your place is kept for you, and you are yet within the borders of the King's country! If you have fallen into the slumber of unconcern, awake and arise, and Christ shall give you light!—*Bishop Huntington.*

Is This Ours?

I once heard a father tell that when he removed his family to a new residence, where the accommodations were more comfortable, the substance much more rich and varied than that to which they had previously been accustomed, his youngest son, yet a lisping infant, ran round every room, and scanned every article with ecstasy, calling out, in childish wonder, at every new sight, "Is this ours, father, and is this ours?" The child did not say "yours," and I observed that the father, while he told the story, was offended with the freedom. You could read in his glistering eye that the infant's confidence in appropriating as his own all that his father had was an important element in his satisfaction.

Such, I suppose, will be the surprise, and joy, and appropriating confidence with which the child of our Father's family will count all his own when he is removed from the comparatively mean condition of things present, and enters the infinite of things to come. When the glories of heaven burst upon his view, he does not stand at a distance, like a stranger, saying, "O God, these are things." He bounds forward to touch and taste every provision which those blessed mansions contain, exclaiming, as he looks in the Father's face, "Father, this and this is ours." The dear child is glad of all the Father's riches, and the Father is gladder of his dear child.—*Arnot.*

Neighbors' Thistles.

A person was once walking with a farmer through a beautiful field, when he happened to see a tall thistle on the other side of the fence. In a second, over the fence he jumped, and cut it off close to the ground.

"Is that your field?" asked his companion. "Oh, no!" said the farmer, "bad weeds do not care for fences; and if I should leave that thistle to blossom in my neighbor's field, I should have plenty of my own."

Evil weeds in your neighbor's field will scatter seeds of evil in your own; therefore every weed pulled up in your neighbor's field is a dangerous enemy driven off from your own. No one liveth or dieth to himself. All are linked together. Sages of old contended that no sin was ever committed whose consequences rested on the head of the sinner alone; that no man could do ill and his fellows not suffer. They illustrated it thus: "A vessel sailing from Joppa carried a passenger, who beneath his berth cut a hole through the ship's side. When the men of the watch expostulated with him, 'What doest thou, O miserable man?' the offender calmly replied, 'What matters it to you? The hole I have made lies under my own berth.'"

This ancient parable is worthy of the utmost consideration. No man perishes alone in his iniquity; no man can guess the full consequences of his transgression.