

are handled, although the treatment of these is in itself all that could be desired. The same remark applies to the discussion, otherwise excellent, of the person and work of Christ. He misses also an adequate recognition of the moral misery of man and the sufficiency of the offer made by Christ to the penitent soul. 'Is not Jesus above all the *Saviour* who delivers man from the power of evil? To say that He is the Supreme *Revealer* is well, but it is not enough.'

J. A. SELBIE.

Zimmern on a Babylonian Trinity.¹

THIS little work by the Leipzig Professor of Assyriology deals not with the well-known Babylonian triad of gods,—Anu, Bel, and Ea,—but with a trinity far more akin to what Christians understand by that term. To begin with, the relation of father and son which subsists between Ea and Marduk (Merodach) is described in some of the magical formulæ (cited by Zimmern) in terms which imply on the one hand that the son is the equal of the father in wisdom, and on the other hand that the father is too exalted and unapproachable to be the object of direct access on the part of men. It is

¹ *Vater, Sohn, und Fürsprecher in d. Bab. Gottesvorstellungen.* Ein Problem für die vergleichende Religionswissenschaft. Von Dr. H. Zimmern. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs. 50 Pf.

through Marduk, the first-born son of Ea, that they are brought near. But even Marduk does not in every instance act directly, for we hear frequently of a third divine being, the fire-god (Gibil or Girru), who, by the medium of his holy fire, brings healing to sufferers. Another most striking feature of the Babylonian religion is the notion of *intercession* which is ascribed to some of the gods, and it is the fire-god to whom by preference this function is attributed.

An interesting question now arises, Have we here mere analogies, or is there a historical relation between these Babylonian speculations and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity? Can even the doctrine of the Messiah and of the Mediator between God and man be completely explained from the Old Testament and from the impression produced by Jesus? Equally evident is the bearing of the above facts upon the reference to 'the spirit and fire' (Matt. iii. 11; Acts ii. 3) and the description of the Paraclete and His work of intercession (John xvi. 16 ff.; cf. Rom. viii. 26). Even if it should prove that no historical connexion subsisted between the Babylonian and the Christian doctrines, the similarity of conceptions must be of the highest interest to students of Comparative Religion. Professor Zimmern's little book, which will not be the last word on the subject, deserves the most careful consideration.

J. A. SELBIE.

Sermonettes on the Golden Texts.

BY THE REV. G. M. MACKIE, M.A., BEYROUT.

The Praises of the Lord.

'Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee.'—Ps. lxxiv. 4.

To have happiness, and to have the secret of maintaining it, and the power to express it,—such is the treasure of this casket.

I. THERE IS HAPPINESS.—For those who have it, there is no need to describe the discovery, to establish the reality, to explain the secret, to have the possession made personal. All that is needed is to rejoice in it.

By different paths men come to the house of God; but wherever it is found to be the Father's house, a place to belong to and be at home in, the discovery brings blessedness, and the blessedness brings praise.

Cups may vary in size and shape, but there is only one way in which they can run over.

II. THE HAPPINESS IS MAINTAINED.—It is by dwelling in God's house, by realising His presence. God knew where to stop in creating man. He gave the will its freedom, but He stopped short of the heart's independence. 'My soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord.' The

temple at Jerusalem was built upon a threshing-floor, and the old work went on, though new names were given to the grain and chaff, to the wind and the winnowing. God's house is still a place where the heart is sifted and cleansed. God's house has always been the place of the Book, and the Book is the Word of His revealed Will. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' Where God's presence is truly sought, His purpose and power come without seeking. They seek us.

Alas for the things that have to go! but there is joy over the things that remain, for they remain for ever.

And so the Lord binds us to Himself by this necessity. We must dwell in His house: we must be continually with Him. It is a law of the spiritual life; for after effort comes reaction, and it is meant to come.

III. THERE IS SOMETHING TO TESTIFY.—The result is praise; and the praise is first for the ear of God, and then for the hearing of men. The contagion of a happy heart, the testimony of a satisfied soul, the reality of moral triumph, the security of the divine keeping, and all the praise that springs from such experience,—this is what magnifies the Lord and makes known the gospel. The higher life is not merely for the higher self. We sing because we must; but there are others who are silent because they must, and the music is meant to be heard by them.

There is just one note of warning. It is better to speak out of our spiritual experience than about it. Personal religion is more than a religious personality.

Again, do not think that your special note of praise is drowned in the general acclamation. Information is needed for the bewildered, hope for the discouraged, and incentive to the indifferent. Hearts differ so wonderfully: there are so many needs to be satisfied, and some have hardly learnt what to desire.

In this inner kingdom of spiritual experience, as in the outer kingdom of nature, there are flowers that open with the morning sun, whose gay colours attract the bee and the butterfly; but there are others whose perfume is kept for the evening, and whose dependence for life is on the wings that are busiest in the dusk.

'Praise ye the Lord.'

Remembrance of Things Past.

'The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer.'—
2 SAM. xxii. 2.

DAVID'S day of triumph found him not only surrounded with faithful soldiers ready to serve their king, but, along with the sights and sounds of the present moment, his eye could hold a review of other forces, and his ear could hear the shouting of former battlefields.

There were things in the past that had found him weak and faithless, that had made him sad and made him wise, and they were not to be forgotten. As he looked back over the retrospect of that long and sore warfare, the scene was a strangely intermingled one of friendship and opposition, of triumph and defeat. The life of David is thus classed, with those of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and Ruth, as one of the ever-fresh stories of God's providence and personal dealing.

On that day of complete deliverance, with the wrath of Saul and all the other troubles laid away in the silence of the buried past, he could now see and say that the Lord had known every step he was taking, and had been guiding him into the way of His commandments. The Lord had always known it all, and now he knew a part of it. He had been in preparation for the charge intrusted to him.

Let us try to think his thoughts, and seek to share his convictions, as we trace the line of that familiar past.

I. IN GREEN PASTURES.—David first comes before us as a bright shepherd-lad, with the simple fortune of perfect health and a happy heart. He adds to this inheritance the reputation of a local hero, and his defence of his sheep brings his name into the gossip by the well of Bethlehem while the shepherds loitered among the sheep-troughs.

II. THE ANOINTED HEAD.—Then came the day of the hurried descent, and the ordeal of the prophet's presence. As the holy oil of consecration was poured upon his head, how the tingling surprise must have crept through his whole being as he felt, what he could not name in words, that he was set apart for some special service, and that for the Lord. Perhaps the call did not find him altogether unprepared. He was a youth and much alone, and his brothers seem to have suspected him as one having day-dreams. In the unwatched reveries of the mountain solitude his

nail-knobbed club or rod may have sometimes been swung like a battle-axe; the shepherd's plain staff may have glowed with gold and sparkled with studded gems; and as he lay in the shade of the cliff or oak tree, with the sling in his hand, the black lizard bobbing on the rock may have received titles of Philistine rank. The uniformity of boyhood is fixed, but youths also will sometimes be youths.

III. THE CUP RUNNING OVER.—Soon a beginning is made, and a very promising one. The voices of disposition and destiny blend together and beckon him onward. Everything seems prepared for him. Ambition has a perplexity of abundance: fame by the magic touch of the harp, fame in the field of battle, fame by alliance with the king's house.

IV. THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.—Then came the king's guess, and the crash to David's house of glass. Everything seemed to go wrong. The path that had been so plain and pleasant began to twist and turn downward. The same things that had helped now hindered. The voices that had cried 'Forward' now cried 'Backward.' What could it mean?

In deep perplexity, he could only plead with Jonathan, 'What have I done?' The estrangement soon stiffened into strong dislike: he was unwelcome, suspected, detested. Then came danger. 'There is but a step,' he could say, 'between me and death.' Then the time of dark wretchedness, days of unlifted gloom, with shapes moving in it that followed him into the light—'waves of death, sorrows of hell, snares of death, great waters, floods of ungodly men.'

There was his own exile and the breaking up of his father's house, the mask of insanity, the fellowship of outlaws, the threatened stoning at the hands of his followers, the secret conviction that he would one day or other perish by the hand of Saul, and, at last, the deep longing to give it up, and get away from it all, and be back to the old happy obscurity of simple days. 'Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!'

But he did not perish by the hand of Saul, and the water he coveted proved too precious to be drunk. Amid many losses, there had been one great gain; amid many shattered hopes, one glorious conviction had been gathering strength. It was the staff in his hand as he turned from the

past to the future: '*The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.*'

Child of God, you know not yet what the 'new name' for you will be; but of this you may be sure: it will be written upon an old sorrow.

'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

Mistaken Views.

'There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.'—PROV. xvi. 25.

THIS is the age of specialists; and one of the most important departments is that which deals with the eye and its defects. We hear in this connexion of heredity; the different effects of town and country life, with their near and remote objects; the results of overwork and unhealthy surroundings; the peculiarities that belong to age, climate, profession, and physical condition. So with the inward eye and the vision of the moral life. Here also we have shortsightedness, discrepancy of focus, stealthy cataract; the inflammation that makes light an agony; the eye that exaggerates and sees double, and that which makes everything seem insignificant and far away; and there is an eye that doats on the dark end of the spectrum.

I. HONEST AND DISHONEST ERROR.—The text confines our attention to honest derangement of vision, or what claims to be such. 'There is a way that seemeth right unto a man.' The seat of the trouble is in the man, not in the way. The way remains where it is, and he chooses it and walks into it. There is a French aphorism that says: 'To know all is to excuse all.' But such forgiveness is itself in need of pardon; for if the moral life be entirely the compulsion of circumstance, there is nothing to be forgiven. Where there is no freedom, there can be no offence.

II. INHERENT DIFFICULTIES.—Many of our troubles in moral vision arise from the inability to see distance. Some things are present, others are past. It is easy to put paint on paper, but it is aerial perspective that makes a picture.

Again, errors of judgment are due to the fact that we give fixed measurements to things that are themselves in motion: growing larger or smaller, advancing or receding. Closely connected with this is the weak eye for angles, and the feeble sense of proportion. If we could only see it,

there is a difference between self and society, between party and mankind, between time and eternity.

III. DECISION AND INDECISION.—Under given conditions, a diminished area always makes a brighter disc. Microscopic objects have no mist. Downrightness is always a desirable thing, especially for emergencies that come suddenly, and only once. It means health to its possessor, and safety to those who know what to expect. It draws to itself unattached particles, and has an incisive momentum that bruises into softer substances. Yes and No are great civilisers. But clearness that is gained by exclusion may cost too much. When the narrowing process begins, it goes on, and self is always the most tempting centre: in fact, the only terminus. It is sometimes difficult for robust natures to see it, but strength of conviction does not necessarily mean correspondence with fact. And fact is the chief thing. In the longrun, a truth is important to the world because it is a truth, not because it is held by you or me. There is a type of mind that gives its opinion like a railway whistle—something meant to be distinct from its surroundings. To such men harmony is a humiliation. This brings us to consider—

IV. THE CULPABILITY OF MISTAKEN VIEWS.—Where and when is the error found blameworthy? Not directly in the region of intellect and its knowledge, but in that of the will and its preferences and energies. The individual error becomes a process, and the process becomes a system. There is first light defied, and then light debased. This belongs to us, not to circumstance. '*Business is business*'—how much that is made to cover and countenance! 'Others do it, and why should not I?' The same man will always say with regard to any loved indulgence: 'This is safe for me, and what have I to do with others?' If we pass from difficulties of the personal life, we find the same obscurity or obliquity of view in things that affect communities, nations, and Churches.

There was the Slavery Question, over which the British Parliament struggled for many years, and for which America poured out its blood. The sincere and saintly John Newton could say that he loved best his slave-voyages to West Africa, because then he had time to study his Bible. To-day, no Christian could say such a thing; but it was different then.

So with the great Temperance Question of to-day. With the light that we have we fix a standard of duty and a weight of blame, which we apply to ourselves, but not to those of previous generations, who did not know what we know. The problem that is now slowly and reluctantly rolling round into the light is that of Denominationalism. These sectarian names did not look small in a small day. They emerged in times of trial, when Christian truth, or some aspect of it, was in danger, and, in connexion with the time and its difficulties, we honour the men who created them. But their day is not ours. Our Westminster Shorter Catechism has no voice for the Church's marching orders. Bunyan and Rutherford had no mission field. The office of ordination in our Presbyterian Churches gravely asks a missionary to the heathen if he has used any unfair means to procure the appointment to academic extinction and an early grave! Such things are out of date. As the Church of Christ now faces its missionary destiny more closely and squarely, these sectarian perpetuities are found to be worse than mischievous. They are simply valueless. Names are for the market of names, but they are mere white of egg and quite tasteless where the reality alone is wanted. By them the seamless robe of the Christian life is made a crazy pattern of conflicting colours, with the largest titles usually on the smallest patches. Because of them, the face of the bride of Christ, instead of being a vision of beauty, is cracked and corrugated with scab and carbuncle. Our denominational names are to-day, in the presence of the mission field, simply so many polyps in the nose that muffle the utterance of the word of life.

Yes, much depends on the view in private life and public, in things secular and sacred.

Elisha found Elijah's mantle at his feet, because his eye had already formed a picture of the ascending chariot. He got the grace because he had looked upon the glory.

'Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.'

The Soul's Rest.

'The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.'—PROV. xviii. 10.

I. THE ORIGIN OF THE TOWER.—The tower was a familiar feature in the Bible land, where

travel was always dangerous, and different races and religions were always in conflict. Towers were generally placed by mountain passes, to guard the approach to the land within; or they were set on the mountain slope, to control the plain below. Hence, in the 121st Psalm, there is an inquiry as to the direction from which help may be looked for; and the answer comes, that it is something better than the mountain fortress: it is from beyond the hills, from Him who made them. So here, 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower.'

II. THE RIGHT OF ADMISSION.—The Bible speaks of certain cities set apart to be cities of refuge. This peculiarity was one rather of degree than of kind, for in the East all cities and villages were places of shelter and safety. They would always protect one of their own from the stranger that would oppress him. The village especially was not a place in which work was done, but a place to retreat to and rest in when the day's work was over. The farmers could not live on their own land, but dwelt together, for shelter and sociability, for convenience as to common needs and combination against common foes. In the large cities there was the double defence of the surrounding wall, and the forces that could unite behind it. Those within were all of one mind and all on one side.

Again, the same relationship of protecting power and faithfulness was seen at the superstitious shrines, or sacred places. There also life and property were safe; for the spirit of the prophet or holy man buried there forbade violence and robbery against those who trusted their all to him, and he followed the offender with punishment a hundredfold. He kept whatever was devoutly committed to his charge.

And so it was a familiar Oriental thought that turned to the Lord's own power and mercy, and spoke of His sure keeping, and also of the only condition on which it could be claimed. There must be a surrendered will and a trustful heart.

'The righteous runneth into it.'

III. THE GLADNESS OF SALVATION.—The Bible

is wonderfully rich in its praises and descriptions of rest. The seat under the vine and fig tree was a green vision that glimmered upon the Israelite from beyond all the stages of the wilderness-journey. There was 'the desired haven' for the storm-tossed vessel, 'the city of habitation' for the traveller, and by the wayside 'the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' Happy the soul that has the right to enter in, who is known to be on the Lord's side! He can receive trustfully the things that come from without,—often dark, unexpected, bewildering things,—for He who has him in safe guidance and keeping knows why they have come, and come to him. He can retreat with them into the fortress, and at the doorway, Doubt, Despondency, and Distress are forbidden to follow. He is safe.

And when the things that disturb and distress are not from without, but within, he can only do the same. The Lord pitieth them that fear Him. He will not allow anything of His own to perish; that which proceeds from Him obtains the victory; He is able to perfect the good work He has begun; the blood of Christ does not return void. There may be made a deeper emptiness, but it is to hold more of His grace; weakness may be found to be greater than was supposed, but it is that His power may rest upon it; self may be discovered to be more subtle and pervading than was imagined, but it will show how great the Saviour is. He is safe. It is the power of God unto salvation.

IV. THE OUTLOOK FROM THE TOWER.—Within there is safety, companionship, and joy; and what is seen from beside the flagstaff? I, who was once without and in danger, what am I to do with this knowledge of salvation?

Once a royal feast of gods and men was disturbed by the rolling in of a golden ball with the inscription of pre-eminence and pride, 'To the Fairest.' In the Christendom of to-day, in the banqueting-hall of salvation, there is a note of noble perplexity among the guests. How differently it reads—'Yet there is Room.'