

Requests and Replies.

1. Is it consonant with both Arminian and Calvinistic theology to teach that there must always be an 'if' in Christian life, that absolute certainty of final salvation is unattainable?
2. If the test of being a Christian is always in the present tense, has past religious experience any evidential value?—J. F.

1. THE question of a man's final salvation is to be viewed from two standpoints: the one divine, the other human.

Viewed from the divine standpoint, according to the Calvinistic theology, there can be no element of doubt as to the final salvation of one who by faith has laid hold of Jesus Christ as his Saviour. All the links of the chain are equally secured by the divine decree, 'Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.' The purpose that secures the final salvation of the believer provides all the necessary steps by which this result is attained. If he prove a backslider, the means are provided by which he is recovered from backsliding. 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; and no man shall pluck them out of My hands.' Thus, when the matter is looked at from the divine point of view, the Calvinistic theology admits of no 'if.'

But, according to the Arminian theology, there is room for an 'if,' even from the divine point of view. For the final salvation of anyone is made to depend on something which is done by himself; even the divine procedure in his case is conditioned by his action in the matter. Should he become a backslider, his salvation would be imperilled, and should he continue a backslider, his salvation would be lost, because Arminianism has no divine provision for certainly recovering him from his departure from the faith.

But the aspect of things is changed, even under the Calvinistic theology, when the matter is looked at from the human point of view. We must suppose an actual case. One puts to me the question, 'Is it certain that I shall be saved?' I must answer that question with an 'if'—'Yes, if you continue to cherish your present faith, and to live a corresponding life.' 'But,' asks the other, 'have I not good reason to know that God has called

me, and justified me, and does it not follow that He will finally glorify me?' I answer, 'If you are really called and justified, this does follow; but, in that case, you know that you will be kept in the path of faith and obedience to the end. The moment you begin to disbelieve, or to act unworthily, you make it doubtful whether you have been really called. You cannot rely on the last link of the chain, if your conduct throws doubt on the first. You cannot be sure of being glorified, if you are making it doubtful whether you are truly called.'

Thus it appears that under the Calvinistic theology there is room for an 'if,' when the matter is regarded from the human point of view. But the 'if' has no reference to the certainty of the issue of the process when it has really been begun. It has reference only to the possibility of error as to whether it has been begun.

If we should express the matter in philosophic phrase, we say—Objectively, there can be no room for an 'if'; subjectively, there may.

2. Supposing it to be granted that 'the test of being a Christian is always in the present tense,' past experience may be very helpful to confirm and complete the evidence. Faith is of many degrees; it may be small as a grain of mustard seed, or it may be the faith that removes mountains. When the Philippian jailer asked, 'What must I do to be saved?' he got the simple but sufficient answer, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' At some future time he may have had doubts as to his state. Such a man as he would be very likely to fall under besetting sins, and at such times doubts would naturally arise as to whether or not he was saved. The true way to act in such circumstances would be to throw himself anew on Christ by faith, and anew appropriate His saving grace. But the act of faith is not a mechanical, but a spiritual, invisible act; it cannot be made clear to the senses, and one does not always realise the peace which it is fitted to bring. Would it not in such a case be a help to the man to recall the past—to recall the time when he, a rough and probably ungodly pagan, with a lifetime of sin upon him, directed his view to Christ, and was lightened of

his burden? In God's gracious economy there are special provisions for strengthening faith. When God called Abraham to behold the stars, and to regard them as an emblem of his future seed, it was to strengthen his faith. When he gave him circumcision, it was for the same purpose. And this, too, is one of the objects of the Christian sacraments. And so past faith may be called in to buttress present faith. But it would be highly objectionable to *substitute*, as evidence, the past for the present. It is said of a great puritan that when dying he asked a minister whether, if once he had been assured of his salvation through faith in Christ, he might not rest on that assurance still. The question denoted a very insecure position; if the minister answered him wisely, he must have directed him, whatever might have been true of the past, to cast himself on Christ now with all his sins, remembering that 'He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.'

W. GARDEN BLAIKIE.

Edinburgh.

Can any of your contributors recommend a concise history of ecclesiastical affairs in Scotland after the death of John Knox?—F. W.

As far as I know, there is no concise history specially dealing with Scottish ecclesiastical affairs subsequent to the Reformation. Your correspondent might find what he wants in one of the series of volumes on the history of the Church of Scotland, published with the authority of that Church, and edited by the Rev. Professor Story.

P. HUME BROWN.

Edinburgh.

Would any Rabbinical scholar kindly give me information as to the Jewish *interpretation* of Numbers xxiv. 7, especially of the clause, 'He shall pour water out of his buckets'? I know what Gesenius says as to the meaning; but I should be grateful for the precise wording of any paraphrase of it to be found in the Talmud or other Jewish interpretations that can be regarded as traditional and præ-Christian.—W. F. M.

Abarbanel explains Num. xxiv. 7 as follows:—Balaam's prediction from ver. 4 is concerning the future condition of Israel after they have been established in the land. He saw in prophetic vision the tabernacle standing in four places, viz.

in Gilgal, in Shiloh, in Nob, and in Gibeon, and therefore he used four figures in successive order.

1. He compared Israel to rivers (he so understands the word נְחָלִים in ver. 6, which we translate valleys), for they shall spread riches and goodness. Therefore he adds, 'He shall pour water out of his buckets.'

2. He compared them to gardens planted by the river, to indicate that the posterity of Israel will be fertile, and shall endure the heat of persecution or trial, like a plant that grows by the side of a river.

3. He compared them to tents or aloes (he gives both meanings to the word אֹהֳלִים), to indicate the power of Israel over Agag. The כ in the word סָמַח is an adverb of time: from the time of Agag's discomfiture, through Saul, will Israel rise higher and higher in power.

4. He compared them to cedars by the waters: this signifies the height of power which Israel will reach in the time of David and Solomon.

A. BERNSTEIN.

London.

I have been much interested in Dr. Grosart's criticism of Dr. Hugh Macmillan's paper on 'Water-marks in the Narratives of our Lord's Transfiguration.' The confident assertion in the concluding sentence of the criticism surprised me. Dr. Grosart says, 'Just as the true locality of Emmaus shows the risen Saviour to have revisited His native Bethlehem.' Would Dr. Grosart kindly inform me, and others of your readers, what is the true location of Emmaus? I know the *'Amwâs*, near the pass of *Bab el Weit*. Distance, if nothing else, makes that location quite inadmissible. I am acquainted with the tradition that the modern *Kulonieh* is the Emmaus of the Gospel, but do not know on what the tradition rests; and, of course, Dr. Grosart could not mean *Kulonieh*, because, from Jerusalem, it lies almost directly north, while Bethlehem is almost directly south. If Dr. Grosart can furnish satisfactory grounds for his confident assertion that Emmaus was so located as to show that the risen Saviour revisited the city of His birth, I, and I think others of your readers, would welcome the assertion. Such a fact would greatly add to the interest of one of the most touching and beautiful narratives in the Gospels.—A. C.

I have read my good friend Dr. Macmillan's second paper on the scene of the Transfiguration with the attention and respect due to anything from him; and I am satisfied to leave my criticisms to vindicate themselves in the light of his concessions:—

1. Whereas before he stated absolutely, '*Mount Hermon is the true spot,*' he now claims only probability.

2. Whereas before he insisted on '*the top,*' he now allows the sides of the mountain.

3. Whereas before he led our Lord and the disciples to '*the top,*' and '*standing amongst the snow,*' he abandons this grotesque misconception.

4. Whereas before he said positively, '*no clouds rest on Tabor,*' he now admits they do.

5. Whereas before he limited the 'booths' to Cæsarea Phillippi, he now recognises them as found equally at Tabor and elsewhere.

6. As to the 'sacred trees,' I needed no book-references to inform me of tree-worship. What I reaffirm is, that the fixing of rags on the trees at Cæsarea Philippi had nothing to do with tree-worship, but is the expression of a relatively recent superstition.

Hence, accepting the tradition, as confirmed by

Origen's quotation from the 'Gospel to the Hebrews' and St. Jerome, and believing that the '*modern travellers*' named by my friend simply follow in the wake of Dr. Robinson's long-disproved reasons against Tabor, I must hold to Tabor a mountain against Mount Hermon a mountain-range. But I make a slip in calling Tabor the highest mountain in Galilee.

A correspondent of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES writes to know what I regard as Emmaus. In accord with my incidental closing sentence, I answer that on the spot I felt satisfied that Urtâs, near Solomon's Pools,—not a very great distance beyond Bethlehem, and about 60 stadia from Jerusalem (St. Luke xxiv. 13),—was the site. See an admirable paper giving this identification in the Palestine Exploration Quarterly Statement for 1883, pp. 53, 64.

ALEXANDER B. GROSART.

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At the Literary Table.

THE BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

I.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY. BY STEWART D. F. SALMOND, M.A., D.D. (*T. & T. Clark*. 8vo, pp. x, 703, 14s.) It is just possible—Professor Salmond himself recognises the possibility—that the title of this book may mislead. The title seems to cover only a part of Biblical Eschatology; the book covers the whole. It is the first scientific account of the Eschatology of the Bible which has been written in English.

Now to say this is to say a great deal. For there is no portion of divine revelation (is there any department of human speculation?) that has been more written about. And some of the writing deserves to be called both scholarship and literature. But much of it has sprung into existence in the midst of controversy, and then it has been panic-stricken and prejudiced; or else it has missed the mark through simple lack of knowledge. Fortunately for Dr. Salmond the periodical wave of excitement over the question of eternal punishment is not at present upon us; and fortunately for us Dr. Salmond has made himself master of

his subject. To attempt so difficult a subject demanded courage, to cover it all demanded patient endurance. Professor Salmond has both. And he has given us a book that is now and will long remain the final court of appeal.

The volume is a large one. It is divided into six books. The first sketches the Ethnic preparation. This covers 150 pages, and to the student of comparative religion will be a pleasant surprise; for Dr. Salmond has not before revealed his familiarity with that branch of study. The second book is, however, more attractive to the student of revelation, is probably the most original part of the volume, and has cost the author most. It is the Old Testament preparation. Then follow the Teaching of Christ; the general Apostolic Doctrine; and the special Pauline Doctrine. The sixth book is entitled 'Conclusions.' An Appendix and an Index close the volume.

The value of the work, as already indicated, lies in its detachment from partisanship and in the range and accuracy of its knowledge. It is not his own or any other man's doctrine of Immor-