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the continued enjoyment of them. Thus, then, she converts the iniquity of her fathers into an evidence of right, and refuses to withdraw claims which she knows to be founded on the grossest literary forgeries in the history of the world.

ARTHUR R. PENNINGTON.



ART. II.—"O WOMAN, GREAT IS THY FAITH."¹

THIS was addressed to one who was reckoned among the unbelievers, and spoken by Jesus when He visited the heathen coasts, or borders, of Tyre and Sidon. These formed that part of the Promised Land which had never been conquered by the Hebrews. It had been allotted to the tribe of Asher, who had failed to occupy it, and thus the people there were still Canaanites. The clamorous woman of Canaan was at home among them, but the disciples of Jesus would seem to have felt themselves in danger from her fellow-countrymen. "Send her away," they said, "for she crieth after us." She was drawing perilous notice to them, as to Jews among Gentiles.

But though the remnant of the Canaanites was alien, or even hostile, to the house of Israel, reports of the wonder-working Jesus had reached them, and He seems to have been commonly spoken of among them as the "Son of David." That was how the woman of Canaan addressed Him. She was in sore distress, and, like the wayside beggar at Jericho, would not let Him go by without prayer for help.

At first He answered her not a word. This appears strange, but Jesus would seem to have explained His silence by saying: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Such an explanation, indeed, may be taken to interpret the apparent severity of a later utterance, when He said: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs"; for to the Israelite such were the Canaanites. But this woman breaks through all the barriers of creed, caste, and nationality, and gains praise for the greatness of her faith from Jesus Himself.

The story of the suppliant in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon holds a very marked place in Gospel history, and many are the thoughts or lessons to which it gives rise.

For one, it shows Jesus in touch with that outer world which was abhorred by His nation. Tyre and Sidon were

¹ Matt. xv. 28.

exceptionally outside the Jewish pale. Not only were they Gentile or heathen cities, but they are spoken of by Jesus Himself as representatives of wickedness. When He upbraided the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done because they repented not, He said: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works that were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." This alone is very notable. It indicates the coming revelation of the kingdom of God—how it should be taken to embrace even the most unpromising of those who came from the north, south, and west, as well as the east. It justifies the title of Christ as "Son of man," and not the Saviour of one particular nation only, as the Israelites expected that He would be. He was, in the words of our Church Catechism, "the Redeemer of *all mankind*," and, in the *Te Deum*, as one "opening the kingdom of heaven to all *believers*," without any exclusive test of nationality.

But the sentence of Christ on such of His own nation as rejected Him did more than indicate His concern for those beside the lost sheep of the house of Israel. His words, upbraiding the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done because they repented not, might be addressed to professing Christians who bring shame upon His name: "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you." We may thus be reminded that there is no salvation without repentance. But there is more than this to be gathered from the story before us. When Jesus went down into those very coasts of Tyre and Sidon and commended a woman there for her "faith," we have a significant light shed upon it. After her repeated importunities, he says: "O woman, great is thy faith." It brought the blessing which she desired. Now we must take the story as it stands. We have no right to construct a touching picture of this woman's "conversion," in order to make it fit into some scheme of salvation which we may have adopted. The dog under the table *did* eat of the Master's crumbs. A Gentile, outside the then visible Church, without being first brought to profess the Jewish creed, carried off a blessing by the sheer force of what Jesus called her "faith"; and we have no reason to assume that she thenceforward became one of those who followed and ministered unto Him.

There is a profound significance in all this, for the use to be made of our Lord's recognition of faith in the woman of Canaan would surely lead to a wide acceptance of this word. Faith is a larger thing than can be put into any verbal shape. The profession, and even controversially tenacious holding, of

an accepted creed does not necessarily imply that we have what Jesus called "faith"—that vivid apprehension of Divine power, of a living God, which makes us appeal to, trust in, and rest upon Him. We, *e.g.*, have a creed. Have we faith? Is it our wish to do and bear our Father's will? Do we cling to Him, though His face may even sometimes seem to be turned away, and He answers us not a word? That, indeed, is the oldest exercise of faith we read of in the Bible, that of Job—a faith which can say: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." This, indeed, is a forecast, however undeveloped and remote, of that trust which can ever enable the Christian to repeat from his heart the Master's words: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." It leads, not to a limited, though real, answer, such as the Gentile woman got, but to the still wider, continuous blessing, which comes to those who can truly say, in life and death: "Not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

This is the greatest lesson we can learn from the praise bestowed upon the woman of Canaan. And it may be of wholesome use to us in these days of disputed theological definition and religious exclusiveness, for they survive from the ancient Jewish time to our own.

There is another more obvious lesson to be learnt from the *perseverance* of her who would not be denied. Perseverance is the secret of almost all so-called success; there are few things which can be reached by a single stride. Final efforts which succeed are the outcome of previous patience and advance. Genius may not precisely be the art of taking pains, but it is barren without them.

The woman of Canaan, however, survives as a help to those who continue instant in *prayer*. When our wants are legitimate and we try to cast our care upon God, when we are in trouble and turn to Him, there is often a check to our approach. Our supplications are perhaps damped by what we read in some book or hear from some lips. Their uselessness (as if they could be tested, like drugs) is cleverly demonstrated.

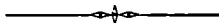
Thus some men lose heart, and discontinue prayer as too childlike, though it is none the worse for that. Or the desire to persevere is threatened from an unexpected quarter. We thought to find certain sympathy from a friend, husband, wife, or promising fellow-Christian, but receive cold water instead—and *that* is often wholesome, if we don't look high enough for help. True compassion never comes to those who whine for it; but all the same, we are sometimes tempted to expect so much that experience bitterly corrects anticipation. We are vexed at being misunderstood, and forget that

others have to be considered as well as ourselves. Good resolutions grow lukewarm, and some lose such reliance on religion as they began with. They begin to doubt God's willingness to help them in hours of disappointment. Prayer becomes conventional and languid; righteous purposes grow barren; we sometimes fail to persevere in efforts to attain them.

Here the woman of Canaan might encourage us. She was in danger of being thwarted by the unsympathetic disciples, and even Jesus Himself answered her not a word. She could only persist in praying till she heard, "O woman, great is thy faith."

Be sure that perseverance in a Godward course will be aided by God, though He bear long with us. The craving for human sympathy may be checked, because we are more ready to receive than to give. The clouds above may be dark, though the sun is behind them. The hill may be steep, but that is the nature of the narrow way, and there is undying virtue in the promise, "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." Only we must keep our faces towards the light; let not a man turn his back to that, however foolish or stumbling his steps may have been. The evangelist's ancient story of the suppliant may become a strengthening gospel to us if our righteous desires are ready to faint. Everything was seemingly against the woman of Canaan; but at last she was told, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

HARRY JONES.



ART. III.—SHORT COMMENTS ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

"Father of us who art in the heavens" (Matthew).

"Father" (Luke).

THIS form of expression is to be found frequently in the Jewish writings and Scriptures. Maimonides gives the Hebrew phrase which exactly corresponds with this title (Lightfoot's "Horæ Hebraicæ"). In the Talmudic tractate Sotah (cap. ix.) we read, "Whom have we to depend on? On our Father who is in heaven." The tractate Yoma (c. viii.) has the words: "Ye are blessed, O Israelites. Who purifies you? Your Father who is in heaven." In the Maaseroth of the Jerusalem Talmud the sentence occurs, "To your Father who is in heaven you did not give it, but to me, the priest."

In Exod. iv. 22 the words are found, "Thus saith the Lord,