

THE QUIET HOUR

THE BLESSED SAINT CERTAINTY.

With out any leaning toward the writer feels that he would like to have a Prodestant calendar of Saints with Saint Certainty's name enrolled upon it.

Coming from a study of the life of the greatest of the Apostles, there is one fact which shines out more luminously than any other as that checkered life-story is recalled. Whatever else Paul was, or was not, Paul was always Sure. You may scan his life and letters with microscopic scrutiny and you will find no trace of wavering or uncertain in his faith.

He knew.

The distinguishing trait of his faith was that he was sure.

The most striking characteristics of the present age is that it is not sure.

It is not even sure of its doubts. The unbelief of today is not atheism—which definitely declares that there is no God; it is agnosticism, which, in a spirit of intellectual flabbiness says, "I don't know whether there is a God; I can't know whether there is a God." It is not even certain of its uncertainties.

And what is true of avowed unbelief, is true of a great multitude of those who avow belief—they are not sure—a puff of religious freakishness, a zephyr of spiritual hysteria, will make them lose their religious equilibrium and topple them over into all sort of fantastic absurdities and crude substitutes for Christianity.

There are multitudes—even in the churches—who, if they were strictly honest with themselves might adopt the prayer of the skeptical soldier dying on the battlefield who in answer to the faithful chaplains urgent solicitation that he send up a prayer, prayed; "Oh God, if there be a God, save my soul if I have a soul.

Over against all this reed-shaken-by the wind religion, Paul's "I know," sounds forth like the booming of the suurf at Gibraltar.

He was sure—"dead sure"—of God, and of the fulfilment of his sure word of promise.

While, in many respects, John the Baptist, in his sturdy this-one-thing-I-do attitude, reminds you of Paul, there was one point in the careers of the two men in which they stand forth in marked contrast. Both were in prison, and their long confinement told upon them until it hardly seemed longer endurable. John seems to have permitted a question to creep into his heart at this point; and he sent his disciples to the Christ with the query; "After all, are you truly the Christ?" He still had faith in his friends, but he seems to have wavered for a moment in the certainty which, before, and after this one lapse of time shone out unflickeringly.

Paul's imprisonment reverse! this experience: his faith in man was staggered, but his sure confidence in God never fluttered a pulse. He said, in that pathetic last letter to Timothy, "All men forsook me, notwithstanding the Lord stood with me."

With reference to the men upon whom he leaned he could echo Burn's plaint;

For, O, mankind is unco' weak
And little to be trusted.

If self the wavring balance shake
'Tis rarely to be trusted.

But he was so sure of Christ that he could rise to that wonderful climax of certainty in the eighth chapter of Romans, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And again he says with that ring of triumphant certainty so characteristic of his unclouded vision of things eternal; "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that I have committed to him against that day." There is no room for questioning that the blessed Saint Certainty was Paul's patron saint.

No doubt throngs of Christians will "get to glory" who lack the lofty serenity of this unclouded faith, but they needlessly multiply their spiritual discomforts on the way. They have ample foundation upon which to build a skyscraper, and they merely build a squat, one-storied shack. Paul selected and clamped together the massive rocks of confidence in Christ, and they were as firm as the foundations of some towering light house that laughs at the tempest's futile attempts to dislodge it. And then, upon this rock-base, he reared his faith—a faith so firm that no storms of earth or hell could move it.

And we may do the same. That old hymn sings it;

"My faith is fixed on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

God is willing. He has made adequate provision for this kind of certainty. His promises are countless, and none of them have ever been broken.

The writer remembers how, when a lad, watching a magician for the first time, as, apparently he plucked silver coins from the air at his will, he returned to his home making up his mind that if the air was full of them he would have some too. He soon learned, of course, that it was merely a trick of seeing.

But this is no illusion.

All round about God's children the riches of his grace are awaiting faith's appropriation, and he who will may draw upon the Master for unlimited supplies.

And he who simply takes God's word for all this and rests in it, may go forth with brow serene and heart of oak, strong because he is sure—not of himself, not for a moment—not of circumstances, they shift and melt away like sand dunes before the encroaching tide;—but sure that "He—whose word can ne'er be broken" will never leave him nor forsake him—even to the end of the world.—J. H. Bomberger.



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